

CINEFANTASTIQUE

December 1992

\$5.50
CAN \$6.50
UK £3.25

BRAM STOKER'S

Dracula

A FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA FILM

Gary Oldman as
Stoker's bloodsucker
turned tragic hero.

BABYLON 5
A science fiction rival
for TV's STAR TREK

QUEEN OF OUTER SPACE
Sigourney Weaver on her ALIEN odyssey, by the numbers

Volume 23 Number 4



DOCTOR MORDRID

Master of the Unknown



Coming on Videocassette September 1992

FULL MOON ENTERTAINMENT Presents "DOCTOR MORDRID" Starring JEFFREY COMBS YVETTE NIPAR JAY ACOVONE
and BRIAN THOMPSON as Kabal Screenplay by C. COURTNEY JOYNER Visual Effects by DAVID ALLEN PRODUCTIONS Director of Photography ADOLFO BARTOLI, A.I.C.

Production Designer MILO Music Composed by RICHARD BAND Based On An Original Idea by CHARLES BAND Produced by CHARLES BAND

Edited by LAUREN SCHAFFER Line Producer KEITH PAYSON Casting by ANTHONY BARNAO, C.S.A.

Directed by ALBERT BAND & CHARLES BAND

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The magazine with a "Sense of Wonder."

DECEMBER, 1992

Welcome to our Halloween issue, and have we got an issue for you! Okay, so it's a little hard to get worked-up about yet another film version of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. It's been filmed umpteen times, and we know the story—not to mention some of the dialogue—by heart. There's also the basic question, in this age of Hannibal Lecter, whether Stoker's Count is even capable of scaring us again. Some relatively recent incarnations of the book with Frank Langella and Louis Jourdan in the late '70s hardly created a stir.

Nevertheless, I'm excited by the prospect of *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA* and I think our lavish preview of director Francis Ford Coppola's forthcoming horror epic will get even die-hard skeptics in the mood. Los Angeles correspondent Steve Biodrowski visited Coppola's *DRACULA* set earlier this year and interviewed the director and members of his creative team. For a high-profile, big-name, big-budget director, Coppola proved a breath of fresh air from the secretive likes of George Lucas or Steven Spielberg. Too many times have we seen "secrecy" used as a scam to hype a feeble effort. Not so here. Coppola threw open for examination every aspect of his production, from makeup design to special effects. Also refreshing was Coppola's head-on approach to horror: we get none of the condescending, pretentious apologia with which directors often approach the genre. Coppola talked our language and spared us the usual "this isn't really a horror film" *mea culpa* of one who is embarrassed to be working in the field.

In addition to our coverage of Coppola's *DRACULA*, Biodrowski also provides a look at the other adaptations, from Bela Lugosi to George Hamilton. Also examined are "Coppola's Horror Roots," reminiscences from the director about toiling on films like *DEMENTIA 13* and Boris Karloff's *THE TERROR* for producer Roger Corman in the '60s.

There's a tangible sense of excitement in the air about *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*. Maybe the time is ripe for a cyclical revival of classic horror.

Frederick S. Clarke



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PHOTO CREDITS: ©1992 Black Crow Prod. (Byron J. Cohen 18, 19); ©1992 Columbia (Ralph Nelson 24-26, 31-33, 34T, 35, 36, 37T, 38, 39, 42, 43, 47-49, 51-53, 54T, 54R, 55; Fabian/Sigma 34B, 40, 41, 50, 54T); ©Walt Disney (Gene Trindl 14, 15); Tabitha King (12L); ©1991 Miramax (58, 59); ©1992 Paramount (62L); Michael Paris (23BL); Keith Payne (13); ©20th Century Fox (Bob Penn 6-9; Don Smetzer 57); ©1992 Universal (Joyce Rudolph 20-22, 23T, 23 BR; Deana Newcomb 61B; Phil Broy 61R); ©1992 Warner Bros (10, 11). **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** Foundation Imaging, Robert Short, Jeff Silifant, Larry Tetewsky. **COVER ART:** David Voigt.

CINEFANTASTIQUE MAGAZINE (ISSN 0145-6032) is published bimonthly in February, April, June, August, October and December at 7240 W. Roosevelt Rd., Forest Park, IL 60130. (708) 366-5566. Second class postage paid at Forest Park, IL 60130 & additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to CINEFANTASTIQUE, P.O. Box 270, Oak Park IL 60303. **Subscriptions:** Four Issues \$18, Eight Issues \$34, Twelve Issues \$48. (Foreign & Canada: Four Issues \$21, Eight Issues \$39, Twelve Issues \$55). Single copies when purchased from publisher: \$8. **Retail Distribution:** In the U.S. by Eastern News Distributors, 250 W. 55th St., New York, N.Y. 10019. (1-800-221-3148). In Great Britain by Titan Distributors, P.O. Box 250, London E34RT. Phone: (01)980-6167. **Submissions** of artwork and articles are encouraged but must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Printed in USA. Contents copyright © 1992 by Frederick S. Clarke. CINEFANTASTIQUE® is a Registered U.S. Trademark.

STAR TREK

DEEP SPACE NINE

The spin-off series began production in August for its January television debut.

By Mark A. Altman

DEEP SPACE NINE, the STAR TREK spin-off set aboard a deteriorating alien space station, began shooting in August under director David Carson. Co-creator and executive producer Rick Berman expressed little concern about possible competition in the cosmos come January, when the show is set to premiere. Warner Bros Television plans to launch its own rival science-fiction series, BABYLON 5, also set on a space station, in February. "I don't know too much about it," said Berman. "It's not something we have really thought about."

DEEP SPACE NINE is a space station used by the Cardassians to deplete the mining resources of the Bajoran homeworld. Federation personnel are put in place to run the station in the premiere episode,

Michelle Forbes who plays Ensign Ro, bowed out of the new series during contract negotiations with Paramount.



The Cardassians (left) built Deep Space Nine to exploit the mining resources of Bajor. The Ferengi (right) run it like a business when the Federation takes over.



now that the Bajorans have thrown off their domination by the Cardassians. "We are not space cops," asserted Berman about the show's premise. "We are not out there to keep order in space. Bajor, newly liberated, is applying for membership into the United Federation of Planets and our people are sent there. They will be stationed there to run the station, but not as enforcers. We have been asked to administer this station so that we can provide a Federation presence to discourage an attack on Bajor or the station by the Cardassians, like UN forces brought to a strategic hot spot."

Added series co-creator and executive producer Michael Piller, "We've been quoted as saying its going to be grittier and darker, which has lent an impression that is not entirely accurate. We feel committed to protecting the vision of the 24th century that Gene Roddenberry created when he cre-

ated STAR TREK, an optimistic view of man and the future. What we have done is to put our people into conflict with one another and with many of the people who are working with us, since not everyone on the station is human or is in Starfleet. More passion, yes; more violence, no."

Staffing the ethnically diverse station are Captain Benjamin Sisko, played by Avery Brooks, a human Starfleet commander with a 12-year-old son. In the pilot, Sisko reluctantly accepts his new assignment on Deep Space Nine but is hardly eager to be there. He has considered taking his son back to earth as opposed to trying to raise him in the dangerous environs of space. In the premiere's teaser, we see Sisko aboard his starship when it is destroyed, and his wife is killed, during the battle at Wolf 239 with the Borg and Picard as Locutus, a back story from THE NEXT

GENERATION, only glimpsed briefly in "Best of Both Worlds—Part II," the series' epic two-parter widely considered the best episode of STAR TREK ever.

The series' pilot is being shot on three soundstages on the Paramount lot across from stages 8 and 9, which house the bridge and ship sets of THE NEXT GENERATION. Patrick Stewart plays the role of Picard in the pilot, which finds the *Enterprise* in orbit around Deep Space Nine.

The science officer aboard the Bajoran station is Lt. Jadzia Dax, a Trill, played by Terry Farrell (HELLRAISER III). The Trill, as seen in the NEXT GENERATION episode "The Host" is a joined species. In DEEP SPACE NINE, the 300-year-old Trill inhabits the body of an attractive humanoid woman in her late 20's. Dax's last host body was that of an elderly man who was a mentor to Sisko, and to their mutual discomfort, Dax and Sisko feel a sexual tension developing between them.

Replacing Michelle Forbes' NEXT GENERATION regular Ensign Ro, who was to be the resident Bajoran aboard the station, is Major Kira Nerys, played by Nana Visitor, the station's Bajoran attache and Sisko's first officer. Forbes, anxious to continue to pursue a feature career, was unable to come to terms with Paramount to become a regular on the new show, although she will continue as a recurring character on THE NEXT GENERATION. "The role of women will be very different



Patrick Stewart as Picard/Locutus, a Borg hybrid seen in the series' pilot leading the attack on Wolf 239, which killed the wife of Deep Space Nine commander Sisko.

on DEEP SPACE NINE," said Berman. "The main action role is that of Major Kira. On a rescue mission in one of the early episodes, two women are in command.

The ship's security officer is Odo, played by Rene Auberjonois, an alien shape shifter who is a gelatinous liquid in his natural state. He appeared 50 years previously in a strange spacecraft and has taken the shape of a humanoid to acclimate, hoping to find the secret to his origin. Odo had been Deep Space Nine's law enforcement official before the Federation took over the station and has been kept on to ride herd over the disparate elements that inhabit the station.

Berman promised an entirely new special effects technique to visualize the metamorphosis of the character, rather than rely on the now overused ILM-devised morphing visuals popularized in TERMINATOR 2. "We have always been able to make the technology work for us," said Berman. "We have people who like those kind of challenges. Morphing has become sort of old hat in the last year or two, on television commercials, in music videos. We are trying to develop new and unique techniques for the shape shifting that's going to

go beyond what exists today."

Dr. Julian Bashir, played by Siddis El Fadil, is a human male in his mid-'20s, fresh out of Starfleet Medical. Bashir is a gung-ho medical specialist anxious to experience life on the frontier. He is naive, charming, cocky and still wet behind the ears.

Quark, played by Armin Shimerman, is the proprietor of the station's bar and entertainment concessions. A Ferengi merchant, Quark forges an interesting relationship with Sisko, although he'll do anything to make a buck and is liked, but not trusted by most of the Starfleet team.

In addition to the action on the station itself, Deep Space Nine is situated near the first stable wormhole discovered in space, allowing Federation vessels to explore an entirely new quadrant of the galaxy. "The Runabout class is a new space vessel created for this show," said Piller. "They are small starships that will allow our characters to travel to nearby systems near where the show is focused and go through the wormhole and get involved with cultures and planets and star systems in the Gamma quadrant. We'll go to adventure as well as have the adventure and conflict come to us." □

STAR TREK

Paramount turned down Captain Kirk's spec script.

By Mark A. Altman

In July, rumors were rampant that Paramount had greenlighted production on a seventh installment of the classic STAR TREK feature film series. Despite denials from Paramount, Hollywood trade papers were discussing the proposed STAR TREK VII as a *fait accompli*.

The announcements, however, were premature, since STAR TREK VII is not among Paramount's current slate of productions in any stage of development. In fact, the genesis of the phantom project can be traced to none other than TREK's resident Captain and would-be director, William Shatner. According to sources at the studio, Shatner, at his own behest, commissioned a film treatment for the new film in the hopes of being handed the directorial reins of the proposed seventh installment. In a December interview in *Cinefantastique*, Shatner stated that he felt a film about a rift in the Spock and Kirk friendship would be a "fascinating" subject for a seventh film.

Shatner's publicity operatives reportedly planted the stories in the trades to drum up support for the project. The move was part of a publicity bonanza reaped by Shatner from the signing of a deal for his autobiography with publisher Harper/Collins, worth nearly three quarters of a million dollars.

However, Paramount reportedly balked at Shatner's proposal. Apparently the studio is content to wait until DEEP SPACE NINE establishes its

space legs, which would allow Paramount to spin-off its lucrative NEXT GENERATION franchise into feature films, establishing a new studio tent pole to replace the aging original cast.

Shatner will instead be involved with a Canadian television series based on his series of *Tek-War* novels which will involve him both as a director and an actor. He is also currently shooting New Line's LETHAL WEAPON spoof, LOADED WEAPON.

Fans of the classic series should be consoled by the fact that James Doohan's Scotty is shooting an episode of THE NEXT GENERATION for television airing during the November sweeps. A meticulous reconstruction of the original *Enterprise* bridge will be used in the flashback story. □

What looks like Trek, sounds like Trek and stars William Shatner? Captain Kirk's alter ego has his own franchise.



QUEEN OF OUTER SPACE

The actress looks back on the science fiction saga that made her a star.

By Alan Jones

The ALIEN saga has now come to an end for actress Sigourney Weaver, who made Warrant Officer Ellen Ripley the thinking science fiction buff's pin-up. As the sole survivor of the doomed spaceship *Nostromo*, she's encountered the deadly Xenomorph menace for the last time. While ALIEN 3 lost out in last summer's mega-boxoffice sweepstakes due to its depressing and nihilistic tone, subsequent bad word-of-mouth and lousy reviews, 42-year-old Weaver was in an upbeat mood when she arrived in London to promote the movie's European release. 20th Century Fox's money-spinning, crowd-pleasing franchise may have abruptly stalled but Weaver noted she felt the David Fincher-directed episode is the perfect caper to Ripley's personal space odyssey. Weaver talked candidly about making ALIEN 3, providing her coproducer perspective on those well-reported "problems" and thoughts on the entire trilogy that has spanned 13 years of her working life.

"There wasn't any given time where the ALIEN masterminds just said, 'Oh, let's just do another one,'" noted Weaver.



Weaver in ALIEN 3, which the star-turned-producer defended as a worthy finale.

"It was a very slow process and a long struggle. The impetus for the third film was primarily due to the huge success of ALIENS. Clearly audiences wanted more. But we approached it with a lot of trepidation because the first two movies were so successful and so well done—well, in my opinion—that everyone was worried a third wouldn't measure up to the standards set by Ridley Scott and James Cameron. It took a long time figuring out what story we should tell and what elements we would try and duplicate. We all decided early on Cameron had done guns so brilliantly that it would be best not to reprise that aspect. Only when we could come up with an original idea and a wonderful director to match, did we all agree we'd then go ahead."

Weaver and company seemed to find that original idea and wonderful director together in eccentric New Zealand helmer Vincent Ward. He wrote a script which fuel-injected the ALIEN concept with religious iconography, medieval myths and an unusual Gothic atmosphere. "Ward's concept was very original and an arresting one as far as I was concerned," said Weaver. "But

RIPLEY'S DEATH WISH

“Ripley has survived so many times—but for what?” asked Weaver. “Survival lost its allure. There was something very depressing about her heading off in a shuttle again.”



Weaver, suited-up, with director Ridley Scott, filming the original ALIEN (1979).

for various reasons, he left the production. To be frank, I think he never really wanted to make an ALIEN picture in the first place. There's a big ALIEN responsibility aside from just telling a story. Perhaps he didn't think he was up to the demands. I don't know.

“David Fincher was obviously very young but keen to tackle that enormous responsibility,” said Weaver. “The directors have always been the stars of each ALIEN movie, really. And until we found the right genius, the ALIEN 3 project never felt set. Only when Fincher appeared did we feel we were in good hands. The first words out of his mouth were, ‘Shave Ripley’s head!’ I knew instantly he wasn’t going to be a quiet and undaring director. To be honest, I was busy having my baby, Charlotte, during the elongated pre-production period, so the longer it took, the happier I was.”

According to Weaver, Fox

did initially approach Ridley Scott to direct ALIEN 3. Weaver recently starred for Scott again in his Christopher Columbus epic 1492. “We talked to Ridley briefly,” said Weaver. “There was an idea at one time to film ALIEN 3 and 4 back to back. Ridley was going to direct one of those but he could never get it together. Vincent Ward came about because we’d seen THE NAVIGATOR and when he came into the first meeting, he had an interesting notion about where to take the movie.”

“David Fincher’s background was in special effects. He worked at ILM for years as a matte painter. And to make this type of movie, you need that kind of specific knowledge and willingness to pay attention to small details. Although ALIEN 3 was his feature debut, he’d shot miles of rock video film. We looked at his whole body of work. David being unknown was the least of our problems. Remember,

Ridley Scott had only directed THE DUELLISTS before ALIEN and James Cameron really only PIRANHA 2 before ALIENS. Are those any better qualifications for making an ALIEN movie? Fincher was great to work with and very funny on what was a difficult, freezing, uncomfortable set at Pinewood Studios.”

Weaver said she had no misgivings over having her hair brutally cropped for the role, either. “There are loads of strange haircuts in England anyway, so I didn’t really get much attention on the street even though I was a 6-foot-tall bald woman,” she laughed. “My husband [theatre director Jim Simpson] was supportive. He told me he liked it. But after my hair had finally grown back, he admitted he hated it. My daughter tried not to look at me. But she didn’t have any hair either! I found it liberating. None of the cast had hair so it was an identifying mark. If you were bald at Pinewood, you were in the picture, therefore a friend. It took a lot of upkeep, though. I shaved it every two days.”

Weaver dismissed the criti-

cism that, because the cast were all bald, it made the characters indistinguishable from each other, dissipating audience empathy. They might just as well have had “Dead Meat” tattooed on their necks instead of prison bar codes. “I totally disagree,” said Weaver. “It was a story point. The planet was infested with deadly lice so everyone’s head had to be shaved. I felt it made people’s faces jump out more and focused on their vulnerability. Audiences are given enough to indicate who they are. There was some religious stuff we shot that didn’t make the final cut—prayer meetings, etc.—showing them in their world more. But that communicates itself well, I think. People know what to expect from the ALIEN tradition and it didn’t have to be dwelt on.”

As for the actors’ regional British accents, especially Brian Glover as Andrews (famous in England for his tea-bag commercials, one reason why the British can’t take the movie seriously), Weaver said, “The Americans love it, although I do keep being asked what a ‘wanker’ is!” (For the record,

Weaver, with Carrie Henn in ALIENS (1986), an on-screen relationship that prompted her to have her own child. Still close, they watched ALIEN 3 together.





Ripley takes a dive in ALIEN 3, clutching the chestburster, her bastard offspring, to her bosom. Noted Weaver of the downbeat ending "Survival has lost its allure."



it's a disparaging remark meaning someone who continually masturbates, a jerk-off artist).

What about the early press reports stating Weaver refused to sign her ALIEN 3 contract until she was allowed script input? Weaver, who was paid £2.5 million (\$4.5 million) to return only received £18,000 (\$32,500) for ALIEN. "My, that sounds very feisty," responded Weaver about the reports suggesting she had star muscle. "What I said was I love this character and I'd love to make another ALIEN movie only if I could be given something to do that Ripley hasn't had the chance to do before. Certain things are built-in to any ALIEN script: Ripley has to say, 'There's an Alien here' and no one will believe her. Within that framework, I wanted Ripley to have a different set of circumstances and the writers came through brilliantly. For a long time in ALIEN 3, she's the Alien herself—despised, feared and outcast. That's the one reason why

she's not afraid of these men. The system has thrown her onto the garbage heap as well. The whole idea of starting life again by having this love affair with Charles Dance and making her deal with her illness and mortality was all new material for me, which I found extremely challenging. Selfishly I wanted those new challenges to interest the actress within me while adhering to the basic storyline."

About her sex scene with prison planet medico Charles Dance, Weaver noted, "It was just a suggestion, kept at a deliberately muted level. I didn't think anyone would want to see us grunting and rolling around in a sci-fi picture. Unless you're making a romantic love story, the characters' privacy must be protected. You saw what we shot. There's nothing cut out. American critics complained about Ripley's sleeping with a complete stranger while European ones want to see more explicit details!"

The thematic thrust of ALIEN 3 is motherhood, accord-

ing to Weaver: the dark Madonna by proxy, failed mother in triplicate, rock-hardened bitch. "With regards to the sexual politics and possible AIDS analogy, it's not for me to say what themes people see in the movie," said Weaver. "While it was hard not to think of AIDS while shooting the picture, that goes for every movie in general these days. Motherhood is the through-line. It was Fincher's idea to make the ending a tender, not brutal, one. It may be an Alien Queen fetus Ripley's carrying, but it is still her child. I wanted to be a mother for a while until I was successful at it. And I wanted Ripley to have a normal life as much as possible. That tension between normalcy and clearly not being able to have it brings Ripley into an intimacy with the Alien that writers David Giler, Walter Hill and I talked about a lot. The irony was never lost on me. Ripley had a daughter and she lost her. Newt was her surrogate daughter and she lost her too. Now she carries a third 'daughter' within her and it costs her her life. The best monster pictures always focus on that kind of threatening intimacy, in a way."

Killing off Newt was an early story decision according to Weaver. "You wanted Newt on this planet with child molesters and rapists?" she asked rhetorically. "This was the choice. As Newt's guardian, I preferred her dead rather than suffer the variety of

awful things she could have been subjected to. And Ripley had to be alone in this installment or it would have diffused the story. It was the artistic difference between, say, ROBINSON CRUSOE and the SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON Charles Dance's sudden death deliberately echoes ALIEN. There, John Hurt was the obvious hero until that 'chestburster' scene. And it was the same sadistic writers who thought of the Dance twist!"

For Weaver, Newt's autopsy was the most horrendous ALIEN 3 scene to play. "Although it was a dummy model of Carrie Henn [the ALIENS actress], it was excruciatingly emotional. When they pulled the sheet off her body, I thought I was going to die. Carrie came to the Los Angeles opening of ALIEN 3 and I made her sit next to me because I was so afraid she'd be upset by the scene and I wanted to protect her. But she wasn't phased at all. She's 14 years old now and a lovely girl. My off-screen relationship with Carrie on ALIENS is the main reason I wanted to become a real mother."

Weaver's co-producer credit on ALIEN 3, for which she'll receive a further 3% of the worldwide boxoffice gross, meant additional responsibilities for the actress. "If I'd had any sense at all, I would have refused the title," she mused. "I was made co-producer out of courtesy because they knew I'd open my opinionated mouth a lot anyway so they might just as

RIPLEY'S FIERY END

“It was director David Fincher’s idea to make the ending a tender, not a brutal one,” said Weaver. “It may be the Alien Queen fetus Ripley’s carrying, but it is still her child.”

well make it legal. I can just picture them gleefully making the decision and saying, ‘Let’s force her to attend some of the political arguments we know we’ll keep having!’ I didn’t ask to be a co-producer but I was touched they invited me to climb aboard. I found it fascinating and learned a great deal. It was a privilege to participate in major decisions. But I’m sure I would have been involved in those anyway as I was on set every day. The pressure from the studio was hardest. I’d be on the telephone practically on a daily basis asking them to reduce it because we were under enough strain as it was.”

About the reshot ending, Weaver had this to say, “What you see is what you get. All we reshot was what we didn’t get around to in the first place. Sure, the climax did resemble the *TERMINATOR 2* one, but we didn’t change it. We got wind of the similar T2 ending just as we started principal shooting. We smuggled a copy of the script off the set and read it. In the earliest script draft Ripley just took the slime dive. But Giler and Hill felt *ALIEN 3* had to finish with the two most powerful icons of all the three movies taken as a whole—Ripley and the chest-burster. We

decided that would be *ALIEN* enough and couldn’t be related to any other film.

“We shot the scene on Good Friday! There was no way Ripley could have lived. She’s carrying the Queen and must sacrifice herself. Vincent Ward had an ending where Ripley choked up the fetus, got back into a space vessel and went away. I thought that was ridiculous. There was something very depressing about her heading off in a shuttle again. The ending as it stands seemed the correct one. Ripley has survived so many times—but for what? Survival has lost its allure. This was her destiny. She saves the world. She kills the last alien. She makes the right choice.”

ALIEN 3 was the easiest episode of all to make in Weaver’s estimation, as she surveyed her memory. “It was a tough shoot but we had lots of laughs,” she said of the latest installment’s shooting. “The hardest was *ALIENS*. I had to carry Newt and heavy guns around, which was physically exhausting. I take my hat off to the directors in each case. I was a bit snobby about science fiction until Ridley Scott convinced me it was a brilliant opportunity. He showed me what could be done

As Ripley in the original. Said Weaver, “Scott convinced me of the opportunity.”



With director Ridley Scott, who Weaver said was approached to direct *ALIEN 3*.

with Ripley and basically let me go off and do it. But sadly, I never realized what a great opportunity it truly was until it was all over.

“James Cameron wrote *ALIENS* without ever meeting me. The picture was scheduled to begin shooting before they even sent me the script. It was crazy. Fox took it for granted I’d see it as another great acting role, and it was.” The film earned Weaver her first Academy Award nomination as Best Actress, before *GORILLAS IN THE MIST* and *WORKING GIRL*. “But I would have liked some consultation,” said Weaver. “I read the *ALIENS* script skipping over the pages of stage directions. I didn’t know guns were the stars until we started. As a member of the L.A. Handgun Control Organization, I was never comfortable with that aspect. Although I didn’t dictate the no-gun policy on *ALIEN 3*, I was more than happy to investigate what real courage was without weapons. Fighting a common enemy, alongside people you don’t really like, without guns, is the real challenge.”

And what does Weaver admire and dislike most about her Ripley character? “I have no kinship with the fact she doesn’t have a powerful imagination,” said Weaver. “Yet that’s what makes her brave. She never thinks about what could go wrong and is one of those people who never panics. She has been a privilege to play because she’s so different from me. She’s a comforting presence and great company. I’ll miss that. But there’s only

so much bad luck someone should have and she’s reached her limit! Rather than be used as a permanently pissed off gym-instructor, I’ll always be grateful to David Giler and Walter Hill who understood that Ripley was a person who only swore under duress. Her sexuality is her real weapon as an ordinary person in extraordinary circumstances who comes through. Her femininity makes her able to take care of people she hates. She has an unjudgmental quality about caring for others. She may judge them harshly on an intellectual level, but she’ll still save them. That’s what makes Ripley a truly feminine heroine.”

While Sigourney Weaver’s *ALIEN* involvement on the acting side is over, she may yet co-produce the next far-off sequel. Although Fox definitely does have a script for an *ALIEN VS. PREDATOR* spin-off, writer David Giler has said he feels there’s still more mileage to be had out of the basic concept before that exploitation avenue is taken. Noncommittally stating she’s heard the *ALIEN MEETS PREDATOR* rumor too, Weaver noted, “I hope they do make more. There are so many different strands to explore. What is the Alien really doing? Where does it come from? What does it want from the human race? How does it communicate? I’d like to see all these ideas developed. For the Alien image is anything that terrifies each of us on a highly personal level, manifested as the ultimate indestructible nightmare.” □



BODY SNATCHERS:

Director Abel Ferrara transforms the Jack

By Keith Holder

Don't fall asleep. The pods are returning—but as you've never seen them before. **BODYSNATCHERS** is the third film based on Jack Finney's classic 1955 science fiction novel *The Body Snatchers*, filmed last winter on an abandoned army base in Selma, Alabama. The new movie covers the same thematic territory—alienation, conformity and paranoia—as the first two.

But Robert H. Solo, who also produced the 1978 version, stoutly maintained that this \$12 million Warner Bros film is not a remake. "This is a totally different plot, totally different characters and a totally different set of circumstances," said Solo. Specifically, the differences are: teen-

The last humans left alive at Ft. Daly, fleeing the pod menace on Ferrara's refurbished base-turned-movie set.



Loading the pods onto army trucks in the swamp, where they are discovered. Ferrara's version is set on a military base, filmed at abandoned Craig Field, near Selma, Alabama.

age protagonists, graphic pod transformation effects, sex and action—a lot of action. Warner Bros doesn't plan to open the new version until 1993.

To give the oft-filmed premise a bigger wallop, Solo engaged Abel Ferrara (1979's *THE DRILLER KILLER*), once described as the "poet-gangster of cinema," to direct a script penned by Stuart Gordon and Dennis Paoli, and longtime Ferrara collaborator Nicholas St. John. Solo described Ferrara as a visceral filmmaker, one "very much into basic human emotions and basic gut behavior, the least common denominator."

The story involves the standard '90s family, in other words, dysfunctional. The father, played by Broadway actor Terry Kinney, is an EPA scientist supervising hazardous waste safety at Fort Daly. Divorced, then remarried (to Meg Tilly), he is oblivious to his rebellious 17-year-old daughter, played by Gabrielle Anwar (*WILD HEARTS CAN'T BE BROKEN*). She, of course, is unsure of her iden-

tity. However, the pods will soon give her ample opportunity to assert her individualism—if she is to retain it. Billy Wirth (*THE LOST BOYS*) plays an army helicopter pilot, an ally (and romantic interest) for Anwar. And Lee Ermev (*FULL METAL JACKET*) portrays an army general, one of Anwar's legions of adversaries.

Solo didn't have the slightest qualm about taking on a property filmed twice before, in part because he discovered

when casting the film with actors aged 16-25, (which is, not coincidentally, the largest filmgoing market today), that almost invariably, they had seen neither the 1956 nor 1978 *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*. In addition to bringing what Solo referred to as a long-delayed sequel to what is, predominately, a virgin audience, he cited what he believes is another valid reason to make *BODYSNATCHERS*. "I thought one can wring the changes as long as one is faithful to the essential premise," said Solo. "So I retained the premise and the rest of the film is original."

Besides the property's potential for action entertainment, Solo seemed well aware of the novel's philosophical base. "It's a device," observed Solo. "Essentially, it's a film about how you have to fight to be who you *are*, whatever that is, in an age of reactionary conformity. And we certainly are in an age of reaction. Since Mr. Reagan came into office, we've had a very conservative America. All those liberal tendencies which were prevalent in the

Forest Whitaker (r) as Major Collins, confronting the base's pod contingent.



THE NEW INVASION

Finney science fiction classic for the '90s.

mid-70s when Jimmy Carter was in office—it's all different today. In today's world it's harder and harder to be an individual; the kids are fighting to be individuals. We're always being invaded by some new *thing*, some new idea, some new force, which manifests itself in our society."

But Solo hastened to add that this version is more personal than political in treatment. "The movie really has to stand on its own as an adventure tale, whatever its political or social connotation might be," said Solo. "In this version, there's more of an action movie feel than the previous versions, more fireworks."

If Solo is conscious of and even encourages multi-level interpretations, director Abel Ferrara's affinity for the project was stated in less grandiose terms. "I've always wanted to make a movie about Martians," he laughed.

A native of the Bronx, Ferrara claimed to be unsure if he saw Don Siegel's 1956 film in its original release, but expressed great enthusiasm for Jack Finney's novel. Describing it as "phenomenal," Ferrara stated, "I made everybody read it. I didn't know there was a book. All of a sudden, this book pops up out of nowhere. And the book is outrageous. This movie has more to do with the book than the other two movies."

Solo brought Ferrara aboard to helm *BODY SNATCHERS* after would-be director Stuart Gordon (*RE-ANIMATOR*) accepted the assignment to direct the science fiction film *FORTRESS* in Australia. And with Ferrara came his frequent collaborators, writer Nicholas St. John and cinematographer Bojan Bazelli.

Like Ferrara, St. John ex-

"I didn't know there was a book," said Ferrara. "It popped out of nowhere and was outrageous. This movie has more to do with the book than the other versions."



Gabrielle Anwar as Marti Malone and Billy Wirth as Tim Young, Ferrara's teen lovers, who fill the shoes of Kevin McCarthy and Dana Wynter in the 1956 version.

pressed much enthusiasm for the genre. "I think science fiction is awesome," he said. "When I was a kid, I really got into monster movies. I read *Famous Monsters of Film-land* every month. Forrest J Ackerman was the best! I always loved the old Universal flicks that he taught us about."

St. John, who was on the location in Selma, contributed to the script by toning down the graphic nature of the Gordon-Paoli version and polishing the characterizations. "I re-oriented it more toward our style vs. what was there, which had a lot of gore," said St. John. (But even though St. John attempted to make *BODY SNATCHERS* less of a splatter film, Ferrara promised that it will definitely be rated R.)

St. John viewed the film's theme in perhaps its broadest context. "For me, it's a very grand scheme of evil vs. good," he said, "an evil that you see every day, one that pervades mankind. And it's seductive, so there's got to be a reason why all these things that we see in the world happen. You go to sleep one day; you wake up the next—and you've got the disease. And the disease *spreads*."

Getting St. John's concept of disease onto the screen is the responsibility of makeup effects expert Tom Burman, who worked on Solo's 1978 version under arduous conditions (out of a suitcase, no less). For *BODY SNATCHERS*, Burman redesigned the pods and devised a method of depicting what occurs to the bodies of

those who are taken over. "Science fiction audiences are more demanding today," said Burman. "I feel that they are owed an explanation of what happens to the old bodies."

Ignored by critics in 1956, the original *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* has become a cult classic, a perennial favorite among aficionados of science fiction. Many critics began to interpret the film as being a metaphor for its time, i.e., reflecting the era of McCarthyism and the anti-Red hysteria then sweeping the country. But its timeless theme is that of the value of individuality and the necessity of remaining ever vigilant to guard against its loss.

That is the common ground that *BODY SNATCHERS* shares with its black-and-white predecessor. The task attempted this time is to conflate the story's enduring premise, non-conformity, with the "teenaged heroes, special effects, sex, action, rock music formula" that appeals to the contemporary filmgoing audience. If Solo, Ferrara et al. can bring it off, then yet another installment will follow—just as surely as pod tendrils sprout anew. □

Ferrara (l), dubbed "the ultimate outlaw filmmaker" by the L.A. Times, with cinematographer Bojan Bazelli.



Stephen King on Film

Hollywood invests in the Maine-man's brand name fright franchise.

By Gary Wood

Bouyed by the boxoffice success of recent film adaptations, Maine-based horror novelist Stephen King has a raft of movie projects on the horizon. In the can is director George Romero's film of King's Jekyll-and-Hyde bestseller,



King, the Maine-based horror scribe.

The Dark Half, starring Timothy Hutton in the dual role of horror novelist Thad Baumont and his fictional monster, George Stark. Caught up in the bankruptcy of Orion Pictures, the finished film is likely to remain in legal limbo for at least the rest of the year, or until a buyer is found for Orion's assets.

Up next is CHILDREN OF THE CORN 2: DEADLY HARVEST, an ersatz sequel to the 1984 clunker, based on King's *Night Shift* story (see right), which Miramax plans to open in October. King novels in various stages of production or development include NEEDFUL THINGS, THE TOMMYKNOCKERS, THINNER and THE STAND.

Warner Bros passed on making THE STAND a feature film, based on a script by Rospo Pallenberg. The property, owned by Laurel Productions, has been picked by ABC as a four-hour "novel for television," to be scripted by King for airing in 1993. Laurel chief Richard Rubinstein noted that King is starting from scratch, referring to neither Pallenberg's two-hour script nor his own earlier drafts.

Also in development with Laurel is King's THINNER, with Tom Holland (FRIGHT NIGHT) attached as writer-director, based on an earlier script by Michael McDowell (BEETLEJUICE). Other King film projects at Laurel include the vampire story NIGHT FLYER, CREEPSHOW 3, to



Timothy Hutton as George Stark, King's horror writer back from the grave in THE DARK HALF, director George Romero's shocker in Orion bankruptcy limbo.

be animated for television, and TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE 2.

Laurel's King TV series, THE GOLDEN YEARS, a ratings flop, is now a dead issue. A four-hour version, currently available on videocassette has condensed the eight-hour miniseries and added a new ending, originally filmed for the European version. Said Rubinstein, "When we got word that we weren't going to get an order for additional shows from CBS, we decided that we would make that the original ending."

Now in development at Rob Reiner's Castle Rock Entertainment is King's NEEDFUL THINGS, with first-time director, Fraser Heston replacing Peter Yates (BREAKING AWAY). Yates had been set to direct from a script by veteran King adapter Lawrence D. Cohen (CARRIE). But Yates brought in W.D. Richter (BUCKAROO BANZAI) to rewrite Cohen's script. Said Cohen, "There were some worries that I was being too faithful to the text, especially in the conclusion, in terms of it being supernatural as opposed to

naturalistic."

Also in development at Castle Rock is RITA HAYWORTH AND THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION, a non-horror tale from King's *Different Seasons* collection, to be directed by Frank Darabont from his own script. *Different Seasons* spawned the King hit STAND BY ME, at Castle Rock. Darabont found support from King in getting the rights when the author appreciated his short THE WOMAN IN THE ROOM.

Also in development as a four-hour "novel for television" at ABC is THE TOMMYKNOCKERS, King's science fiction change of pace. The mini-series is being readied for airing during next year's May sweeps, based on a script by Lawrence D. Cohen, who is co-producing with Robert Konigsberg and Larry Sanitsky, for whom Cohen wrote King's IT, a ratings hit on ABC in 1990. Said Cohen, "It turns out that Judd Parkin, who is head of mini-series at ABC, was there when IT was done. He's got a real love for the genre. The script got a real receptive reading." □

Stephen King

Children of the Corn II

Nobody liked the first one, but here's the sequel because King horror is hot!

By William Wilson Goodson Jr.

After *THE LAWNMOWER MAN* (March), *PET SEMATARY II* (August) and now *CHILDREN OF THE CORN II* (October), 1992 is proving to be the year of the Stephen King knock-off. The proliferation of film projects with little or no connection to King, designed to capitalize on his name and reputation, have started to rattle the Maine-based best-selling horror writer.

When *THE LAWNMOWER MAN* stole the thunder of King's own *SLEEPWALKERS* (May), the only authentic King cinematic outing this year, and bested it at the boxoffice, King struck back, filing suit against New Line Cinema and producer Allied Vision for advertising the film using King's name in a possessory credit.

The latest King pretender, *CHILDREN OF THE CORN II: DEADLY HARVEST*, which Miramax opens in October, is a sequel to the King *Night Shift* story filmed by New World Pictures in 1984 to almost universal critical disdain. In the King story and original film, a demonic presence, couched in Old Testament language and imagery, corrupts the children of a fundamentalist farming community, prompting them to slaughter their parents. New World sold the sequel rights to Trans-Atlantic Pictures, which wrapped filming of the sequel in August 1991 in Liberty, North Carolina.

Directed by David Price



Paul Scherer (l to r), Christie Clark, Rosalind Allen and Terence Knox face the terror of King's "He Who Walks Behind the Rows," a Halloween October release.

(*SON OF DARKNESS: TO DIE FOR II*), the script by A.L. Katz, Gilbert Adler and William Froehlich (*RETURN TO HORROR HIGH*) expands only slightly on the motives of King's cornfield satan. Dubbed "He Who Walks Behind the Rows" by King, the rural demon god was supposedly destroyed by Linda Hamilton and Peter Horton in the original film by burning off the fields. The sequel follows the worshipping children of the title, scattered among foster families as the trouble starts all over again. The film turns King's horror into a supernatural avenger which appears when man disrupts the balance of nature, manipulating children as tools against those who "profane the corn."

Filmed in just four weeks for slightly more than \$1 million, the sequel stars Terence Knox (*ST. ELSEWHERE*) and Rosalind Allen (*SON OF DARK-*

NESS) as the adults who confront the faceless power. Ned Romero (*DEERSLAYER*) portrays a modern-day Indian. Micah, the new prophet of the children, is played by Ryan Bollman. Like the original film, shot on location in Iowa, the sequel used North Carolina locations extensively to stand-in for the story's Gatlin, Nebraska setting.

Shooting the film for Price is director of photography Levie Isaacks (*WAXWORKS*, *TALES FROM THE CRYPT*). Isaacks sought a low-key lighting effect for the action, tinged with blue, a look he termed "English night," to make the film look eerie and unsettling. Filming on actual locations, according to Isaacks, "helped achieve a look of nitty-gritty realism."

But why make a sequel to a low-budget film that caused very little stir in the first place? To make a ton of money,

according to Price, who pointed out that the original was extremely profitable. "A million dollar film that makes \$12 million is going to show a bigger profit than any \$30 million film," said Price.

Price has been in the film industry for many years. His father, Frank Price, was once president of Columbia Pictures, allowing son David the luxury of growing up on movie sets. Price worked as an actor (*9 TO 5*, *FAST TIMES AT RIDGEMONT HIGH*), and served as an assistant to producer/director Richard Donner on *THE TOY* and *LADY-HAWKE*. Price said he enjoyed directing. "Acting isn't very steady work." □

Ryan Bollman as Micah, the children's dark prophet, a continuation of King's *Night Shift* story, first filmed in 1984.



Disney's Aladdin

The Arabian Nights set to music with Robin Williams and computer animation.

By Sheldon Teitelbaum

In one of several out-takes from Walt Disney's ALADDIN paraded before the Hollywood press corps a few months ago at what has become the studio's annual, bi-coastal animation "show and tell," the Genie, a.k.a. typically frenetic Disney stalwart Robin Williams), bursts forth from his bottle and, in a fit of pent-up Catskill shtick, declares, "Oy! Ten thousand years will give you *such* a crick in the neck."

Predictably, this gag didn't sit well with some of the P.C. prima donnas and other Third Worlders in the audience attuned to a threatened outbreak of Arab-bashing triggered by the film's release in November. Spurred by the Genie's Yiddish accent, these clowns asked Disney chief Jeffrey Katzenberg if he wasn't worried about possible international repercussions. Sensibly, the "reformed memo-writer" responded that Disney could not spend its energies second-guessing the world's political mores and sensibilities. These films are made in Hollywood, not Marrakesh.

"ALADDIN shares a number of things in common with its Oscar-winning predecessors, THE LITTLE MERMAID and BEAUTY AND THE BEAST," noted Katzenberg with predictable but not unjustifiable hype. "It is obviously also based on a classic



Directors Ron Clements (standing, left) and John Musker, with songwriters Tim Rice (seated, left) and Alan Menken, making the Disney animation fantasy sing.

fairy tale; it has at its center what we hope will be a very strong theme—believe in yourself and others will too, for your true self is your best and strongest self. And it's got a great romance and some incredible music."

But Katzenberg stressed ALADDIN's originality. "It's as different from each and every one of the others as they are from the ones that preceded them. Animation is only limited by the imagination of our artists, and we hope we've challenged them to make ALADDIN as different from BEAUTY AND THE BEAST as LITTLE MERMAID was from 101 DALMATIANS. The tone, the look and the spirit of this movie as well as an extraordinary amount of detail has

taken us off on a new pioneering path."

Though destined to be the last of the brilliant Howard Ashman/Alan Menken musical collaborations for Disney, ALADDIN actually predates BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, and goes back, in fact, to the time the sadly defunct dynamic duo (Ashman died last year of an AIDS-related illness) was working on THE LITTLE MERMAID. "Howard taught our movies how to sing again," said Katzenberg, "and Alan is our personal Genie."

They wrote three of ALADDIN's songs: "Arabian Nights," "Friends Like Me" and "Prince Ali." Three other Menken tunes—"One Jump Ahead," "A Whole New World" and "Why Me?"—were subsequent-

ly provided lyrics by Tony Award-winner Tim (JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR, EVITA, CHESS) Rice.

"ALADDIN was actually Howard Ashman's idea," recounted co-director Ron Clements, a 16-year veteran of Disney's animation department and co-director, with John Musker, of THE LITTLE MERMAID. A veteran apprentice of Disney animator Frank Thomas, Clements first honed his feathers on THE RESCUERS, PETE'S DRAGON, and THE FOX AND THE HOUND. In 1986, he joined up with Musker as co-writer and co-director of THE ADVENTURES OF THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE.

"Howard wrote a treatment and he and Alan wrote several songs," recounted Clements. "When LITTLE MERMAID was finished, John [Musker] and I started working on the movie, and we wrote an original first draft screenplay. As we got into production, though, we ran into some story snags and we needed some help. So we brought in two other writers, Ted Elliot and Terry Rossio, who took over."

ALADDIN, Clements noted, takes place in the mythical kingdom of Agrabah. Aladdin is a homeless teenage street urchin who lives by his wits—this year's uplifting Disney theme, he said, is the "diamond in the rough." Explained Cle-



The Genie, voiced by Williams, Aladdin, his kleptomaniac monkey sidekick, Abu, and the flying carpet, turned into a character with computer animation's bag of tricks.

ments, "He has hidden potential: he's smart, he's resourceful and even though he's been dealt a bad hand, he knows he was meant for bigger things than the life of a street urchin."

Aladdin falls in love with Princess Jasmine, a heroine in the Ariel and Belle mold. The fated couple is thwarted by a typical Disney villain, the sultan's treacherous "wazir," Jafar. More interesting is Jafar's sidekick, Iago, a meddlesome parrot who plays the fool publicly, but whose beak hides

a sharp tongue and an insightful, if somewhat irritating mind. "Iago will probably go down as the most obnoxious character in the history of animation," noted Clements. He does not, however, discount the possibility of a brisk future in McDonald's Happy Meals.

Were it not for Williams' overpowering presence, this could probably be described as a sidekick's movie. Aladdin is accompanied by a kleptomaniac monkey, Abu. Jasmine toots around with a protective

tiger, Rajah, and both are befriended by a computer-animated flying carpet. According to Clements, the carpet is one of the film's striking innovations—the first marriage, he said, of computer graphics and character. The carpet, in essence an animated rectangle, was used as a screen for texture-mapping images. Redrawing the patterns that swirl wildly and incessantly on it throughout the movie would have been impossible to do by hand, he implied.

Clements said that each of the recent Disney opuses has in fact pushed Disney further along in its understanding of what computer technology can achieve in the medium. "Early on, computer animation helped us enhance camera work and background or, in the case of *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*, romance. Then we used these techniques to enhance character. The next step, it seemed to us, is to use them to enhance adventure, as in *ALADDIN*'s magic carpet ride."

According to Eric Goldberg, supervising animator in Lon-

don, where he owned a studio called Pizzaz Pictures before joining Disney, *ALADDIN* adopts an entirely different style of animation from *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*. That film, and earlier efforts like *THE RESCUERS DOWN UNDER*, relied on academic realism in their depiction of scenes and characters. The style adopted in *ALADDIN* is decidedly unrealistic, with each of the characters instantly recognizable as somewhat embellished graphic emblems. "They make very bold graphic statements immediately when they are on the screen," said Goldberg. "This kind of approach also gives us a lot of flexibility—a kind of fluid approach that gives real expression to the drawing." One of the design inspirations for the look of the characters was the work of *New Yorker* cartoonist Al Hirschfeld.

"It's rather a lot of fun to draw this way," said Goldberg. "It's very expressive, very flamboyant and also appropriate given the tone of the picture, which is a comedy." □

Trina Price, a traditionally trained Disney character animator, refines the Magic Carpet at her computer workstation. *ALADDIN* opens nationally November 27.





By Mark Altman

Premiering in February, as part of the Warner Bros "fifth network" consortium of first-run syndicated fare, is the two-hour made-for-television movie, **BABYLON 5**. Created by TWILIGHT ZONE and CAPTAIN POWER veteran, J. Michael Straczynski, **BABYLON 5** is set on a huge space station, almost a self-contained world, with echoes of Arthur C. Clarke's *Rendezvous With Rama*.

The film, which the studio intends to continue as a series of one-hour episodes if the pilot "is on budget and in focus," according to Straczynski, faces stiff competition for viewers when it premieres in 1993. Following in the wake of Paramount's launch of STAR TREK spin-off DEEP SPACE NINE, it goes head-to-head with first-run syndication's first franchise. The prospect is undaunting to creator Straczynski, who promises a show quite unlike TREK, featuring a dark, gritty look more akin to HILL STREET BLUES than STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION.

"Our intention, quite simply, is to kick their ass," said Straczynski. "Visually, dramatically, character-wise and on every possible level. **BABYLON 5** will be a fresher, radically different sort of show. We don't have their limitations. They're hamstrung and we're going to go in there and go nuts."

BABYLON 5 is the fifth of a series of space stations built by the Earth Alliance and serves

Look out STAR TREK! Warner Bros TV backs science fiction rival.



An alien Vorlon ship docks with the Babylon 5, computer graphics by Foundation Imaging.

as both a freeport, with travelers and merchants moving through the station and as a sort of intergalactic League of Nations, with one representative from each of the five cosmic alliances present aboard the station. None of the governments truly trusts the other and the threat of renewed war is ever present. The space station includes a number of alien environments, a hydroponics

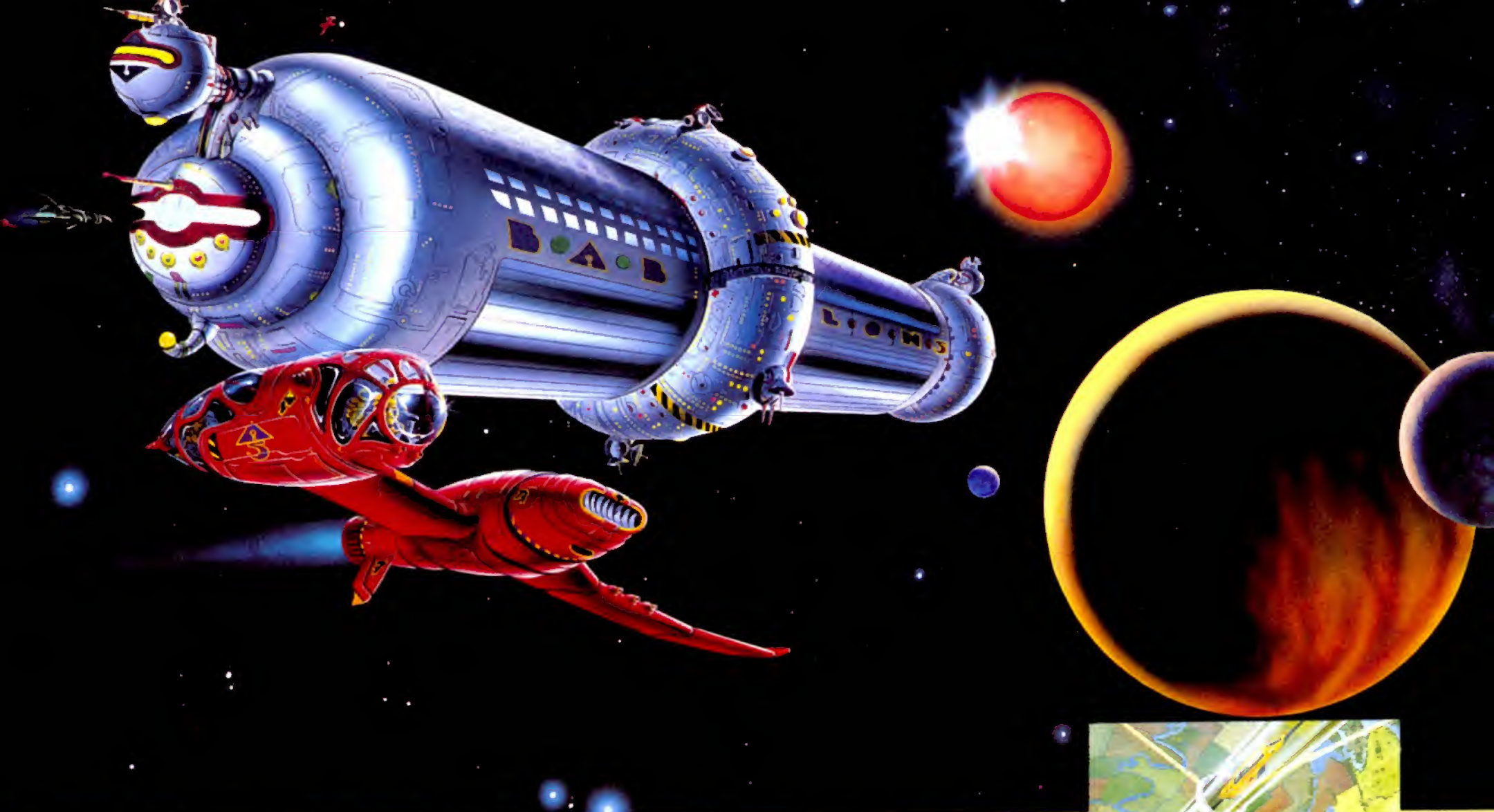
lab, casino, gymnasium and much more.

Straczynski has assembled an impressive team to help him bring his long gestating science-fiction saga to the screen. During more than four years, he has written nearly 200 pages of material and has outlined the series' plot through five seasons. "Each episode stands individually, but if you put it together, a much larger story

emerges," said Straczynski. "It builds towards that storyline. We've already talked to a lot of writers. The first year will employ mainly well-known science-fiction writers like Harlan Ellison, D.C. Fontana and David Gerrold. We have some big names that have agreed to do our show."

Straczynski sees the show as an alternative to STAR TREK where many disenfranchised genre specialists can ply their trade without the constrictions of the Gene Roddenberry universe. He is critical of those who have thumbed their nose at the genre in the past and promises **BABYLON 5** will be aimed at science-fiction fans, boasting an attention to scientific accuracy and a deep, abiding affinity for the genre. "Television SF is mired in the '60s," said Straczynski. "Cop shows were the same way before HILL STREET BLUES came along. The problem is, the good guys—whether it's the *Enterprise* or the *Galactica* crew—have no flaws whatsoever, and then there are the bad guys. You don't have that much latitude in a show like that."

"I think if you merge a really good SF premise with the characterization and depth of HILLS STREET BLUES or L.A. LAW, then you've got something. For instance, our security officer, Garibaldi has a problem with booze. Our captain, Sinclair—someone screwed with him during the war and he doesn't know how, but he's going to find out. They all have problems and any of them can turn that around."



Promotional artwork used by Warner Bros to announce the proposed series, showing the interior of the Babylon 5 (inset), a ship so massive it contains its own ecosystem, including weather. The two-hour pilot, now in production, airs February.

BABYLON 5 is populated with an ensemble of characters, like *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*, who will be both regular and recurring. "We're setting up a series of characters that appear to be one way—G'kar's the bad guy; Londo's the comedy relief—but what's going to happen is we're going to pull the rug out from under the viewers at one point and they become something other than what you think they are."

"BABYLON 5 says if you can get along with someone with five arms and six limbs, you can get along with the guy next door. We have to find

some way to cooperate. There are references in the screenplay to the war where the earth was almost wiped out and how the aliens might succeed the second time. We have to learn to communicate, and that makes it more timely."

Among those brought on-board for the pilot are director Richard Compton (*THE EQUALIZER*), producer John Copeland (*CAPTAIN POWER*), production designer and art director John Iacovelli (*HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS*), conceptual designer Steven Burg (*T2*, *TOTAL RECALL*) and visual effects designer Ron Thornton has

devised a new system for computer animation to visualize the series' striking, and comparatively inexpensive effects.

Among the series' cast are a diverse array of actors, including Tamilyn Tomita (*COME SEE THE PARADISE*) as Laurel Takashima; Andreas Katsulas, *THE NEXT GENERATION*'s menacing Romulan, Tomalak, as treacherous alien ambassador G'kar; Patricia Talman (Tom Savini's *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD*) as the telepath Lyta; Peter Jurassic as Ambassador London; Jerry Doyle as Security Chief Garabaldi; Johnny Seeka as Dr. Kyle; and New



York stage actor and Julliard graduate Michael O'Hare as Commander Sinclair.

Ironically, the series production notes have described the series as *CASABLANCA* in space, featuring stories of smuggling, intrigue, assassination and spying, which is the same analogy *STAR TREK* producer Michael Piller has drawn in describing *DEEP SPACE NINE*. □

Effects supervised by Ron Thornton of Valencia-based Foundation Imaging, a closeup of the Babylon 5 (left) and the organic, shape-changing Vorlon ship.



C

A sweet,

By Dan Scapperotti

The dark, brooding world of the familiar inner city is the setting for another tale of terror from director Bernard Rose, who made his feature film debut with *PAPERHOUSE* [19:3:13]. The London-born director's latest, *CANDYMAN* is based on "The Forbidden," a short story by Clive Barker, a sweet return to the form of the traditional horror film, which opens nationwide from TriStar October 16.

"I've always liked horror films," said Rose, "but I haven't liked one in a long time. They've become standup slasher comedians, haven't they? I'm not interested in horror films that are basically slice-and-dice movies. To me they're not frightening, anyway, the 'slash a teenager, tell a joke' school."

Following a stint as a gofer on Jim Henson's *THE MUPPET SHOW*, Rose went to film school where he discovered Stanley Kubrick and Roman Polanski. "I love Polanski's *REPULSION*, *ROSEMARY'S BABY* and *THE TENANT*," he said. "They're like a little trilogy. I've always thought those films were the most perfectly realized films anyone had ever made. Particularly in this genre."

Rose was actually offered a different Barker story to direct, but chose to do "The Forbidden" instead. Rose expanded Barker's story in writing the screenplay, but maintained he kept to the spirit of the material. "Much of what I did was amplify what was already there," said Rose, who termed his adaptation "very close, actually."

The director made significant changes to the Barker original, which is set in Liverpool, England. The film takes



Above: Candyman (Tony Todd) prepares to sacrifice the reincarnation of his tragic love (Virginia Madsen). Left: Todd as the legendary urban boogeyman, destroyed by bees. Below: Director Bernard Rose (r) films Madsen's dilemma.



CANDYMAN

scary return to classic horror film form.

place in a black Chicago ghetto of Rose's invention, suggested by the Cabrini Green housing project, the location he selected for filming. "The racial aspect of the story is my invention," said Rose. "I decided to set it in America because I felt it would make it more accessible to a world audience. I chose Chicago because I went there for a film festival and felt it was extraordinary looking in terms of its architecture. The film is about modern architecture. Cabrini Green has got the highest murder rate per square foot in the world. It's a very, very, very scary place. I researched the film by talking to the police and people who live there."

Adding to the horror of the film's gruesome murders is the fact that they are based on actual events. "That is 100% true," said Rose. "We shot an exterior of the actual condominium block where the murders took place. But to hide what we were doing from the residents association, we changed the name. It's actually a place called the Sandburg Village in Chicago. What's also true is the series of murders committed by coming through the backs of medicine cabinets. It's an architectural feature of both buildings, and a murder was committed in Cabrini Green in exactly that fashion."

Rose's screenplay also provides a background story for the Candyman, the urban horror myth played by Tony Todd who haunts the black ghetto. "Candyman is not black in Clive's story," said Rose. "In fact the whole back story of the interracial love affair that went wrong is not in the book. Everything that's in the book is in the film but it's been amplified."

CANDYMAN delivers grim, unalloyed horror which sets

itself apart from other recent genre entries. "I think that one of the things that appeals to me about the horror genre is that it's sort of like making a porn film or a comedy," said Rose. "If you're making a porn film all anyone is interested in is if they get a hard-on. Right? And if you're making a comedy, all anyone is interested in is, does anyone laugh? Once you've got the premise that people want to be terrified you can get away with things that studio executives wouldn't let you do in other types of movies."

"There is basically a golden rule now in movies against tragedy. You cannot have any kind of tragic conclusion to a story. Everything has to turn out right. The good people triumph, the bad people suffer. In horror movies these rules seem to be suspended, providing it's frightening. I'm rather bored with happy endings. They reduce the sense of danger. It's like having the absolute feeling that however complicated or convoluted the problem any character may be going through in a movie, you feel so confident in most movies that at the end there is going to be a *deus ex machina* that's going to solve everything. There is almost no suspense to the story anymore."

While CANDYMAN boasts several gruesome murders, including the castration of a child, Rose maintained that the film is not overly violent. "The film is more about dread than about violence," said Rose. "I was very keen to show that when somebody dies there are emotional consequences. When a character gets slaughtered, it's not that it's just horrific, it's also quite upsetting, because it's somebody you like who's dying."

Rose had known Virginia

Madsen socially before casting the Chicago native as Helen Lyle. The cool beauty began her film career with DUNE and recently appeared in HIGHLANDER II. "She's got that very feisty quality and I needed someone who could carry the movie and have that sense of being driven to doing the things that Helen has to do. I also needed someone who was very brave, to do scenes with insects and fire."

Talk about brave, to fulfill the legend of Candyman's demise, actor Tony Todd, under the supervision of bee wrangler Norman Gary, had to perform with a swarm of live bees. Rose felt that special effects couldn't realize the scene convincingly. "If you look at that scene carefully," said Rose, "there is no way a dummy head could be used. That's Tony Todd. We put the bees in his mouth and turned the cameras on."

The most difficult scene to film, said Rose, was the ending bonfire sequence, taking a week to shoot on several diverse locations. "Parts were shot in Chicago, others in a Los Angeles warehouse and others in the desert," recalled Rose. "Fire is dangerous."

Rose noted that he sees CANDYMAN in terms of Edgar Allan Poe. "It's a romance of death, like 'The Tomb of Ligeia,' a 19th-century idea of lovers dying together being the ultimate consummation of some kind of sex act. I saw the relationship between Candyman and Helen in those terms, a doomed love affair where death is the ultimate love act. Candyman only goes after people he loves. He's not going after people for the joy of killing. First you've got to call him, and second there has to be some kind of connection. His relationship to



Todd and Madsen, a researcher into urban myths held captive by the supernatural or her own imagination?

Helen is very complicated. She's not just someone he wants to rip the guts out of."

Vanessa Williams, the defrocked beauty queen-turned-singing star, plays Anne-Marie McCoy, a decent single parent living in the dregs of the housing project. "The character is based on somebody I met while I was researching the film in Cabrini Green," said Rose. "She lived there and helped me a great deal. Most of the people trapped in terrible places like Cabrini Green are like Anne-Marie. They're people who just want to get on with their lives and are trying to make the best they can of themselves and their children in what is an appalling environment. I thought it was very important that that was stated in the strongest possible terms." □

DR. GIGGLES

Queasy mix of humor and horror toplines Larry Drake.

By Dale Kutzera

It's a gruesome, terrifying shot. Even makeup effects designer Greg Nicotero, who specializes in foam latex skin and fake blood, was sickened. The setting is a morgue. The body of Mrs. Evan Rendell, wife of the crazed Dr. Rendell, is wheeled in. The attendant thinks he hears giggling, but shakes it off. Suddenly Mrs. Rendell's body moves. He throws the cover aside. The torso shudders and contorts—something is inside! Then from within, the blade of a scalpel pierces out through the chest. The incision widens to reveal the giggling, blood-soaked face of young Evan Jr.

Thus begins DR. GIGGLES, Largo Entertainment's \$7 million horror/comedy about the mad son of a mad doctor who returns to his hometown of Moore-high, California, to resume the family practice, namely murder. This doctor is a real cut-up. "I think he has two passions in life: medicine and vengeance," said the film's star, Larry Drake (L.A. LAW, DARK-MAN). Universal plans to open the film in October, just in time for Halloween.

Drake, who once played a maniacal Santa Claus on an episode of TALES FROM



Drake as Evan Rendell, an escaped mental patient known as "Dr. Giggles," with his bag full of "medical tools," out for an exam.

THE CRYPT, explained the Dr. Giggles role, which Largo hopes to develop into a horror franchise. "His emotional growth has been stunted since he was seven because his father went wacko and started killing people. In the institution he's called Dr. Giggles because no one knows his real name. Giggling is the primary emotional expression he has. I don't know if I succeeded, but I never

wanted him to giggle with glee about killing someone. I never wanted him to look like he enjoyed the killing. He's not a typical horror film maniac. He's more of a kid with a science kit."

Armed with a bottomless doctor's bag and a textbook full of medical platitudes, Dr. Giggles should do for the medical check-up what JAWS did for a day at the beach. "I thought this character should be the antithesis of the things we recognize from going to the doctor," said director Manny Coto, making his feature film debut. "I wanted the film to be suspenseful and scary, but funny at the same time. I created Dr. Giggles to be a kind of compilation of medical lore." Coto wrote the film's screenplay based on a script called MR. GIGGLES by Graeme Whifler. "I don't want to denigrate it because it was actually pretty funny," said Coto of the original script. "But Largo wasn't happy with it." Called in by Largo to work on the script, Coto, who has a doctor father and a brother in medical school, gave it a different slant.

A typical Coto gag has Evan ask a girl he just chased over a 30-foot embankment, "Do you feel any discomfort?" To take another victim's temperature Evan inserts a sharpened ther-

Drake, in makeup by KNB Effects.

mometer into her throat—and through the back of her neck—her temperature drops as she dies. Then there's the time the good doctor reaches for every general practitioner's favorite weapon, a golf club. "One second you're laughing and the next he's whipping around people's heads," said Coto. "So it goes back and forth. It's not easy. The characters that inhabit the town are pretty real, they are not over the top. Dr. Giggles is really the screwy character. He starts doing these things, but he doesn't do them in a goofy manner. He does them very straight, which makes it funnier to me."

Of the queasy mix of humor and horror Coto observed, "It's very similar in style to TALES FROM THE CRYPT and the EC comics that I loved. They had a great sense of humor and made the really gory aspects more palatable. It's a sick sense of humor, but I think it's buried deep within all of us."

Drake said he saw the film as "an extended Jeffrey Dahmer joke." Already strongly identi-

“It’s very similar in style to **TALES FROM THE CRYPT** and the **EC Comics** that I loved,” said first-time director **Manny Coto**. “It’s a sick sense of humor buried within all of us.”



The star of **L.A. LAW** said he hesitated doing his fourth horror film in a row.

fied from his Emmy-winning work as Benny Stulwicz on **L.A. LAW**, Drake did not leap at the part of Evan Rendell. “It took me a long time to say yes,” said Drake. “This is my fourth horror film out of six jobs since **L.A. LAW** started—that’s my hesitation. I don’t like being that limited. It could be graphic and gruesome, which is not what I had in mind. But Manny [Coto] and the people at Largo made me realize this was a comic book film. It had humor. They very much want it to be as funny as it is scary. I hope we have succeeded at that.”

Comic book film couldn’t be closer to the truth. **DR. GIGGLES** is the first movie project co-produced with Dark Horse Entertainment, the film division of Dark Horse Comics, Inc. In addition to a comic adaptation of the screenplay, Dark Horse will be publishing several prequel stories leading up to the October release of the film and, hopefully, a successful series of further adventures. This is a reversal of the company’s highly successful practice of creating comic books

based on film characters such as **ALIENS**, **PREDATOR**, **ROBOCOP** and **THE TERMINATOR**.

“For several years I’ve been attempting to build a special arrangement with some motion picture company because I felt we had literally hundreds of properties that would translate very well onto the screen,” explained Mike Richardson, president of Dark Horse. “We met with the people at Largo—Lloyd Levin and Larry Gordon—and they were supportive. We hit it off.”

The first-look agreement works both ways. Largo is developing such Dark Horse titles as **CONCRETE** (written by Larry Wilson and Carolyn Thompson, the writers of **ADDAMS FAMILY**, **EDWARD SCISSORHANDS** and **BEETLEJUICE**) and **TIME COP** (from director Sam Raimi), while Dark Horse is translating several Largo projects to comic form, including **DR. GIGGLES** and Raimi’s upcoming **EVIL DEAD III: ARMY OF DARKNESS**. The relationship is so tight that

both Coto and Raimi are writing the comic book versions of their films, perhaps a first in the history of comics. Richardson is not surprised. “There seems to be some link between people interested in movies and people interested in comics. It’s very much the same process of visualizing a story.”

For Coto, whose previous credits include two low-budget horror films and episodes of HBO’s **TALES FROM THE CRYPT** and Laurel Productions’ **MONSTERS**, writing a comic was natural. “I’ve been a die-hard comic fan since I was a kid, starting with *Spiderman* and all the Marvel comics,” said Coto. “Comics are like a less expensive version of a film. I think reading comic books and learning the angles and dialogue definitely builds a visual sense that’s needed in directing.

DR. GIGGLES is being produced by Stuart Besser, who was chosen for his ability to stretch limited budgets and his experience producing Wes Craven’s **THE PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS**. Besser also served as Madonna’s production manager on **TRUTH**

OR **DARE** and worked with director Alan Rudolph on **TROUBLE IN MIND**, **THE MODERNS** and **MADE IN HEAVEN**. Besser said he sees little difference, however, between his “art” and horror film duties. “I still have a set amount of money and have to make the best film from the script. A lot of the elements are the same—motivating people and getting the most on film.”

Besser brought with him from **PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS** the **KNB** makeup effects group, a plus in stretching the budget. According to Greg Nicotero (who, along with Bob Kurtzman and Howard Berger from **KNB**), the company has seen a meteoric rise since its formation in 1988. “It went from us three in a shop to 30 people. **GROSS ANATOMY** was our biggest break into mainstream movies where we got away from doing little slasher horror films. We ended up getting a real good gig with Castle Rock. We did **MISERY**, **SIBLING RIVALRY** and **CITY SLICKERS** back-to-back last year.” Perhaps the best compliment of **KNB**’s work is that no one seems to

Holly Marie Combs, a teen with a heart problem who’s not sure she wants Giggles to operate, humor not for every taste that Universal plans to open at Halloween.



“We didn’t use a lot of blood in any of the effects,” said KNB makeup expert Greg Nicotero. “It was just a matter of creating that moment of ‘uhhh’—a punch in the stomach.”



The doctor will see you now. Larry Drake as DR. GIGGLES, ready for some minor surgery, a film project developed by Oregon-based Dark Horse Comics.

know what they did in CITY SLICKERS. “It was the calf birth,” Nicotero explained. “It was a fake mother cow.”

For most of the past year, KNB has focused their efforts on Sam Raimi’s ARMY OF DARKNESS, their biggest project to date. With that completed, Nicotero and company turned their imaginations to several other projects, including DOPPLEGANGER, SINGLE WHITE FEMALE, the latest FRIDAY THE 13TH and DR. GIGGLES. “With this film, we just tried to take the effects one step further,” said Nicotero. “We didn’t even use a lot of blood in any of the effects. It was just that moment of *uhhh*—that punch in the stomach. There’s one character who is stabbed in the back of the neck with a scalpel. He falls back and you see the scalpel pop out the front of his neck when he hits the ground.”

One such punch is a sequence in which Dr. Giggles inserts a speculum in the nostril of one “patient.” The effect could have been done with a collapsible speculum, but all those involved wanted to see the full effect of the device creeping up underneath the character’s skin to her forehead. The only way this could be achieved was with a false, mechanical head. “We sculpted the face to enhance her expression,” said KNB artist Gino Crognale. “Greg [Nicotero] was working the cables, so as she’s screaming, the jaws are going, and the brows are moving. It’s great. He shoves it up the nostril and pulls it out and all this snot and

stuff comes out with it.”

“We used some newer materials to make the face more realistic,” Nicotero continued. “It’s a new type of silicone gelatin. The guys had used it on ALIENS III for the Lance Henriksen dummy. When you deal with foam latex it shrinks just enough to distort the features of the actor so when you stretch that over a mechanism the fake head will not look like the actor. Foam latex is great for appliance work, but when you get into making fake heads, you need to find the best material.”

KNB used the new type of silicone, which moves more like real skin, in the casting of the full torso for the gruesome opening sequence. The body was cast, then painted, punched with hair, and shipped to the film’s Portland, Oregon, location. The folks at Alaska Airlines received quite a surprise when KNB’s Greg Nicotero

and Gino Crognale opened the coffin-like box. “We had one body and a couple insert pieces for the scalpel stuff,” said Nicotero. “And the kid actor they got was great. He loved it at first, but seven hours later when he was cold and tired and covered with blood, he just wanted to go home. But he was a trouper.”

Another torso of actor Larry Drake was cast and sculpted by KNB for a scene in which Dr. Giggles removes a bullet from his side. Preliminary shots used appliances on Drake himself, while close-ups of the actual extraction used a false torso with a gaping wound filled with fake blood and chicken livers. In each case Nicotero and Crognale worked closely with cinematographer Rob Draper to ensure their work was filmed at its best. Said Nicotero, “He’s not the kind of DP that says, ‘Oh, it’s an effect. Let’s put a lot of light on it so the audience can see it.’ He really knows how to light stuff with pools of light, shadow and people back-lit so it’s moody and it fits.”

The extensive use of makeup effects meant that many scenes would be built from a variety of disjointed shots. For Larry Drake this meant preparing

each scene well in advance so his performance would build from shot to shot. Nowhere was this disjointed style of shooting more evident than in a sequence set in a hall of mirrors. “The biggest challenge for me was the mirror maze sequence,” said Coto. “All these characters ended up in a mirror maze with Giggles chasing them. I wanted to make this special and took my cue from LADY FROM SHANGHAI. Remember when the guy comes out with the crutches and there are these reflections? Well, we have images of a doctor’s bag swinging back and forth.” Two days were spent on production designer Bill Malley’s elaborate set. At times, several doubles for each actor were sent walking through the maze at once, creating more “reflections” than would otherwise have been possible.

The release of DR. GIGGLES will be accompanied by Dark Horse’s largest promotion effort ever. Larry Drake’s image will be seen on 25,000 giveaway movie posters, a half-million pull-out posters and thousands of in-store displays including 4,500 life-size stand-ups. This unique joint venture between film and comics could keep this doctor practicing medicine for years to come.

For director Manny Coto, the project is a dream come true. “I really wanted to direct,” said Coto. “When I read bios of Coppola and Lucas and learned how each one eventually got to directing by writing, I figured I better learn to write. I would prefer to write *and* direct because I hold writing in such great esteem that when I direct someone else’s work, I feel I’m not doing enough. I feel like an employee. I would love to stay in the horror genre, but move to a higher level. I definitely love horror and fantasy and science fiction.” □

Makeup designers Gino Crognale (l) and Greg Nicotero prepare a gelatin effects head of Richard Bradford as Officer Magruder for his encounter with Dr. Giggles.



DR. GIGGLES

HORROR DIRECTOR MANNY COTO

A genre fan's Hollywood success story, hitting the million-dollar script jackpot.

By Dale Kutzera

DR. GIGGLES is director Manny Coto's feature film debut but already the 30-year-old director is something of a horror specialist. And he likes it that way. Besides directing a USC student film, JACK IN THE BOX, and episodes of TALES FROM THE CRYPT and MONSTERS, Coto co-wrote THE TICKING MAN, a spec script that sold for over \$1 million in March 1990, during Hollywood's brief outbreak of megabuck script fever.

"It was a one-day bidding war," said Coto. "At ten o'clock in the morning all the studios were lined up outside my agent's office waiting to pick up the script. Coto had co-written the script with Brian Helgeland, who scripted NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET IV. "We had written a horror script called FREUDS that didn't sell and were very depressed about it," said

Steven Weber doesn't like what's on the dinner menu in "Mournin' Mess," Coto's episode of HBO's TALES FROM THE CRYPT, which was telecast last July.



Coto. THE TICKING MAN was their attempt to come up with something more commercial. "What if a nuclear bomb became sentient?" was how Coto described their inspiration.

Set in the post cold-war world of military disarmament, a thinking, humanoid bomb doesn't want to be scrapped and "launches" itself. "It basically wants to fulfill its mission in life, which is what we all want," said Coto. "The guy who goes after it is in love with bombs. The film opens with him as a kid building a bomb as a science project. When the teacher gives him a D, he blows up the teacher's car. My favorite part of the script was this character—which was perfect for Bruce Willis—a wise-cracking guy in love with things that blow up who has to chase it down."

Selling a million-dollar script with Bruce Willis attached was almost the storybook ending to Coto's success in Hollywood. A Florida native, he began making films in high school and later at Loyola University in New Orleans. After moving to Los Angeles, he worked at the Film Consortium, a commercial production house owned by Noel Marshall, producer of THE EXORCIST. While there, Coto shot THE TWIST, a 25-minute murder mystery in 35mm starring Tippi Hedren, Marshall's wife, which earned Coto an agent and acceptance into the American Film Institute's directing program.

A die-hard horror fan, Coto sold his first screenplay, STAINED GLASS, to Dino De Laurentiis shortly before his DEG company went bankrupt. "It was about this old house where a stained glass window reflects murders that happened 50 years before. The murderer can travel in and out of the glass and puddles of water. It was a fun script that I would love to try and get back."

At AFI Coto poured his profits from STAINED GLASS into JACK IN THE BOX, the first horror film produced at the school. "It was about a little jack-in-the-box that comes to life and pops out and



Larry Drake performs open heart surgery on Holly Marie Combs in DR. GIGGLES, Coto's feature-film directing debut, made for Largo Entertainment.

kills people," said Coto. "The short, which won a Focus award, came to the attention of producer/director Richard Donner, who offered Coto an episode of TALES FROM THE CRYPT."

Then came the sale of THE TICKING MAN to Larry Gordon's Largo Entertainment, the producers of Coto's DR. GIGGLES. Bruce Willis read the script on the set of DIE HARD II. Recalled Coto, "Willis said, 'Yeah, I want to do this' and there was a deal made by the end of the day." But Willis went on to make THE LAST BOY SCOUT instead. "It's sitting at Largo and they are trying to figure out what to do with it," said Coto. "I've heard it's not dead." □

Coto (r) behind the DR. GIGGLES camera for Largo, the company which bought his spec script of THE TICKING MAN for Bruce Willis for a cool million.



COPPOLA'S DRACULA

Oscar-winner Francis Coppola infuses new blood into a horror masterpiece.

*By Steve
Biodrowski*

In the world of cinema, the usual justification for yet another version of an oft-told tale is the use of some technology that has been developed since the previous version, whether it be color, wide-screen, or a special effects process. In the case of BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA, since the classic Bela Lugosi vehicle in 1931, there have already been remakes in color (with Christopher Lee in 1958) and in wide-screen (with Frank Langella in 1979). Consequently, in the wake of TERMINATOR 2's Oscar-winning computer morphing, one might expect to see a high-tech Dracula transforming from man into bat as never before.

Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. The rationale behind this remake is not technical innovation but faithful adaptation. As both director Francis Ford Coppola and screenwriter Jim Hart pointed out, Bram Stoker's novel has never before been truly adapted to the screen. In keeping with the novel's Gothic



Coppola and Keanu Reeves as Jonathan Harker on the set of Dracula's castle at the Sony Studios.

tone and Victorian setting, Coppola's directorial approach deliberately avoided modern special effects technology. Expect no computer-generated mist creeping through corridors like the water tentacle in THE ABYSS. Instead, expect jumpcuts and dissolves to transform the elegant Count into a savage beast. Coppola's BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA was done, sometimes literally, with mirrors. Columbia Pictures opens the \$30 million production nationwide November 20.

Coppola first became involved in the project when actress Winona Ryder asked him to read the Jim Hart screenplay, which he recognized as being faithful to its source. "The book's been around for 100 years, but it was substantially unmade—and it's about the undead," Coppola laughed, and went on to explain why he thought a new version would be valid.

"If you ask someone to tell you the story of DRACULA, you'll get a scrambled egg of every DRACULA and pseudo-

DRACULA film ever done. Even in the so-called good DRACULA films, the characters of the book are all changed; for instance, in one it's Renfield who goes to Castle Dracula, whereas in the book it's Jonathan Harker. There has never been a version the way Bram Stoker wrote it. Usually, most of them, including the Bela Lugosi version, were very influenced by the play, which changed the story altogether, because it tried to unify the action so there wouldn't be a lot of sets, whereas the real Bram Stoker *Dracula* is almost like a Victorian adventure novel—they hunt him back to his castle. It's a different, robust kind of story."

The method used to put this robust story on the screen was influenced by Columbia Pictures' desire to avoid location shooting overseas. Noted Coppola, "In the early discussions with Columbia, I said, 'Do you want us to go to Europe and London?' They seemed to have a very strong opinion—it's a new company, and this is an important year for them—that they wanted the production



Gary Oldman as the 15th-century Vlad Dracula, renouncing God on finding that his wife Elizabeth (Winona Ryder) has taken her own life because of reports that her husband has died in battle, defending Christendom from the Turks, a scene not found in Stoker. Columbia Pictures opens Coppola's horror epic nationally on November 20.



The vampire hunters (l to r): Cary Elwes as Arthur Holmwood, Richard E. Grant as Dr. Seward, Anthony Hopkins as Van Helsing, Keanu Reeves as Jonathan Harker and Bill Campbell as Quincy Morris. Coppola's *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA* is the first screen version to feature the complete cast of Stoker's characters from the novel.

“There has never been a version the way Bram Stoker wrote it,” said director Francis Coppola. “It’s like a Victorian adventure novel, a unique, robust kind of story.”

close to home. I said, ‘Okay, how about if we do it all in a studio, with hanging miniatures, and do everything in a style like the old days?’ They said, ‘Fine.’”

Obviously, the decision presented some technical challenges. “A movie is just a thousand problems,” said Coppola, ticking them off: “Getting that many sets up and getting them to look like you want, making the film convincing enough so that the audience enjoys it and yet having the style so that it’s imaginative. There are a thousand problems, especially when you have wolves, snakes, bugs, effects, costumes—and we had to do it all in 68 days. You do it like you run the mile—to see how well you do it.”

What made the challenge worthwhile for Coppola was the opportunity for experimentation. “A horror film allows you a little more leeway than does another kind of drama if you want to experiment with style,” said Coppola. “The choice to make the

film entirely at Columbia Studios in Los Angeles implied a very different look, because the story takes place all over England, and it has many exteriors. How do you do that in a studio? That was the challenge: using the resources of a sound stage to depict this sprawling story. The fact that we went with that choice—as opposed to going all around Eastern Europe, shooting in real places like Werner Herzog’s film—implied that it definitely was going to have its own look. We were trying to do a story with 70 or 80 locations and John Ford-type horse-chase sequences. Because we didn’t have the kind of budget to do *TERMINATOR 2*-type sophisticated effects, we were going to do it all using the few stages at Columbia and some old-fashioned—I’ll call them ‘naive’—special effects.

“We decided, since Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* is set around 1897, we’d use the tricks of the early magicians when they first started experimenting with

film, and try to do the effects that way, in-camera. I liked the idea of making it as a turn-of-the-century movie—we even shot some of it with a Pathe camera, which seemed appropriate.”

With Ryder attached to the script to play Mina, Coppola took her suggestion to cast Anthony Hopkins as Professor Van Helsing. Coppola’s next big priority, of course, was casting the title role. “In general, our concept was to use a young cast,” said Coppola. “When I’m on the spot to come up with somebody to play a character from a book, I go out looking for what I have in my head, but I usually come down to saying, ‘I’ll just cast the greatest actor I can come up with.’”

“I felt that Gary Oldman had the passion. He’s young, so he can do the romantic parts. I liked his work in *SID AND NANCY* and *PRICK UP*

continued on page 31

DRACULA

THE OFT- TOLD STORY

A legion of movie vampires has supplanted Stoker's book in the public consciousness.

By Steve Biodrowski

Sometimes, a literary character, through the process of being adapted into different media, can take on a life of its own, accruing new detail with each interpretation and eventually extending well beyond the original author's vision. A good example is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, who acquired his deer-stalker cap and Inverness cape courtesy of Sidney Paget's illustrations for the *Strand Magazine*, learned to smoke a meerschaum pipe when actor William Gillette portrayed him on stage, and never uttered the famous line, "Elementary, my dear Watson!" until Basil Rathbone played the role on screen. An even better example is BRAMSTOKER'S DRAC-

ULA. Originally subtitled THE UNTOLD STORY, Francis Ford Coppola's film is based on a book that has gone untold repeatedly.

The character in the book may be a fascinating monster, but he is very definitely a horrible one. The air of cultured aristocracy is there, especially in the early scenes at Castle Dracula of the Count playing host to the hapless Jonathan Harker, but this air is merely a deceptive cloud hiding the monstrous lining. Sophisticated he may be, but Stoker's Dracula is better defined by the pride he exhibits when boasting of being a descendant of Attila the Hun.

His physical description emphasizes not hypnotic fascination but animal strength: ("the big ape of the vampires,

The first screen version of Stoker's 1897 book was actually made by F.W. Murnau in 1922, titled NOSFERATU because it was unauthorized, starring Max Schreck.



The 1931 film starring Bela Lugosi, based on a popular Broadway play of the period, made a sensation of Stoker's book, and a star of its Hungarian actor.

the hirsute Slav," Lestat de Lioncourt rather contemptuously dubs him in Anne Rice's *The Vampire Lestat*). His face is a strong aquiline with a thin nose and arched nostrils; his mouth, beneath a mustache, fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp teeth; and his pale ears are extremely pointed at the top. As Professor Leonard Wolf points out in *A Dream of Dracula*, "The lurking animal, more than the elegant, corrupt Continental, is the real creature of the novel... Van Helsing speaks of his 'child-mind,' and Dracula is dangerous because he is in the course of evolving it into a brain that will be devoted to the grandeur of evil."

That process of evolution is never completed in the novel, but most subsequent interpretations take it for granted to such an extent that the popular image of Dracula has all but eclipsed the original character-

ization. It's a little hard to imagine Frank Langella, for example (or Louis Jourdan or John Carradine, for that matter) leading troops in "warlike fury" to defend the Transylvanian homeland against a Turkish invasion.

The first stage in Dracula's on-screen evolution was an offshoot that bore few descendants. F. W. Murnau's NOSFERATU: A SYMPHONY OF SHUDDERS (1922) was an unofficial adaptation, made without bothering to acquire the rights from Stoker's widow, who promptly sued. Unlike later filmmakers, Murnau emphasized the monstrous aspects of the Count's appearance, having actor Max Schreck's makeup suggest the countenance of a giant rat. The film continues to maintain critical respectability today—a phenomenon made explicable only by the fact that it is seldom screened. Anyone who



“The film image of Dracula has all but eclipsed the original concept. It’s difficult to imagine Frank Langella, et al. leading troops in a warlike defense of Transylvania.”

has ever actually endured this tedious vehicle has to wonder why criticism of being dated and primitive, so often leveled at the Lugosi version, has not been leveled with far more accuracy at Murnau’s effort.

Surprisingly, Francis Ford Coppola calls it “probably the best Dracula film” and screenwriter Jim Hart described it as the most faithful to its source, even though Murnau transfers the action from England to Germany and casts the vampire as a sort of undead Shylock, an ethnic foreigner invading the fatherland and drinking the blood of Lucy, who comes off as a sort of Rhine-maiden virtuously sacrificing herself in order to destroy the monster.

Easily the most influential element of the film is its conclusion, in which Dracula (or Graf Orlock, as he was originally called, in a futile attempt to fool Mrs. Stoker), perishes in the light of the dawning sun. Neither folklore nor Stoker describes sunlight as fatal to vampires; the image is Murnau’s invention, and it has been with us ever since.

In the late 1920s, the novel was adapted into a play by Hamilton Deane and John L. Balderston. For practical reasons, the story was condensed to take place entirely in London; more significant was a change which took place in the title character. As David Skal, author of *Hollywood Gothic*, pointed out, the theatrical convention of the time was that the villain had to be a person one could believably invite into one’s living room. Pointed

ears, protruding fangs, and pallorous complexion obviously didn’t fit the bill, so the Count received a complete make-over. Skal’s book, subtitled “The Tangled Web of Dracula from Novel to Stage to Screen,” is excellent.

Whereas Stoker had described Dracula as “clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour about him anywhere,” the play cast him in elegant evening clothes, including white tie and a red medallion of some chivalric order. Also, Stoker’s only memorable reference to a cape occurs when the Count is crawling face down the castle wall “with his cloak spreading out around him like great wings.” For the play, the cape, with an extremely high collar, became an essential part of the stagecraft: at one point, two characters try to seize the Count while his back is to the audience but end up holding only the empty cape, which, with its collar, eclipsed the actor’s disappearance through a trap door.

When Universal Pictures bought the rights to the play, in 1931, they also brought along its star, Bela Lugosi (who was paid a miserly \$500 a week for appearing in the film—less than co-stars Helen Chandler and David Manners, who were contract players at the studio.) Though the film version would try to fuse elements of the novel with the play, the caped image of Dracula was so indelibly etched in the public imagination that it had to be retained, whether or not it always made complete sense. (For example, it was easy to believe that this Transylvanian Count would wear a swallow-tail coat while blending in with London’s upper-class society, but in his native land, you might expect him to wear something a little more traditional.)

Seen today, the film’s flaws are readily apparent: based mostly on the play, the film is often stagy rather than cinematic, with long dialogue passages filling us in on details we should have seen visualized. The early Castle Dracula sequence, taken entirely from the book, still oozes an effectively creepy atmosphere, and Lugosi’s performance con-



Bela Lugosi, who played the role on stage, in the 1931 Universal screen version, the cultured aristocrat.



Lon Chaney Jr. in Universal’s 1943 sequel, SON OF DRACULA, a quick devolution to exploitation.



William Marshall as BLACULA, an egregious AIP blaxploitation film of 1972, but still acted with dignity.



David Niven as OLD DRACULA, a 1973 British vehicle that sought to mine Stoker’s character for laughs.

tinues to define the popular image of a vampire.

A native of Hungary who had originally learned his role phonetically, Lugosi certainly captured some aspects of Stoker’s intention, such as the description that Dracula spoke “excellent English, but with a strange intonation.” Also, his rather theatrical style of acting, which could come across as overacting, was ideally suited to this larger-than-life character. Unfortunately, in keeping with the image of the play, Universal and Tod Browning took a too-subtle approach to the character: Dracula never bares his fangs to the camera, and Lugosi is allowed only the occasional snarling expression to break through the aristocratic veneer. (One of the film’s memorable moments occurs when Dracula knocks the mirror out of Van Helsing’s hand: Lugosi’s look of rage at having his secret discovered is like something Stoker would have described.)

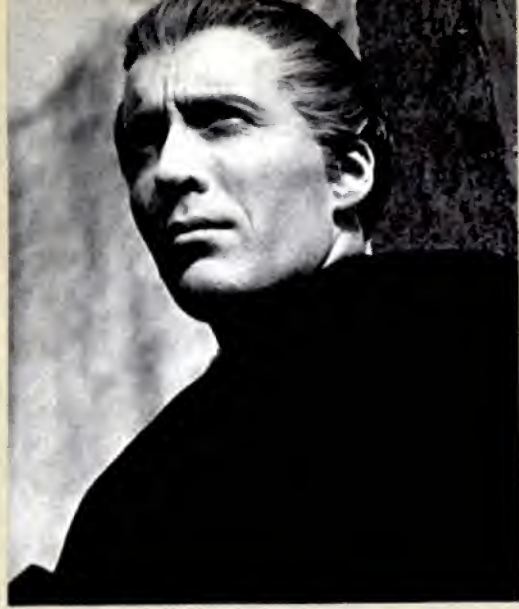
When Hammer Films re-

made DRACULA in 1958 with Christopher Lee, several changes were obvious. Avoiding the stage adaptation, the screenplay was a telescoped version which captured the essence of Stoker’s story while omitting the details. Though set entirely in Central Europe (not until the sequel DRACULA, PRINCE OF DARKNESS would the locale be specified as Transylvania), the film seems to take place in a caricatured version of Victorian London; and Lee, speaking without Lugosi’s accent, erases the foreign image of the character. Instead, the emphasis is on the aristocratic vampire’s attractive qualities.

Though Lee retains the cloak, its red lining (at least in HORROR OF DRACULA) is eliminated, favoring Stoker’s description of the clothing as being without a speck of color. Rather than Lugosi’s melodic cadences, Lee opted for a fast, authoritarian tone of voice. Like Stoker’s character, he speaks “excellent English,”



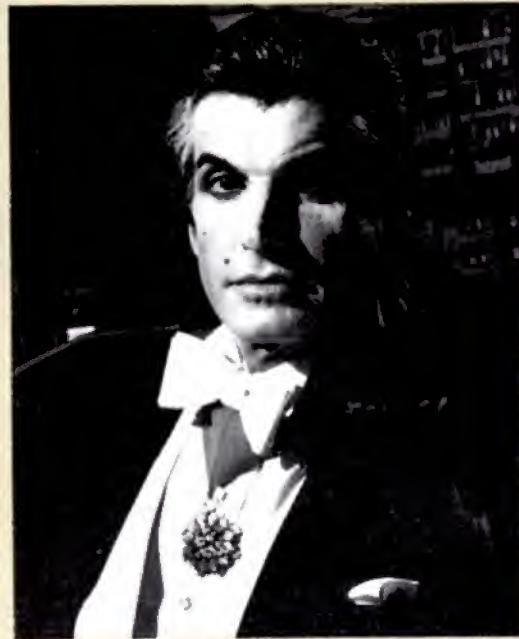
John Carradine, Shakespearean-voiced in Universal's 1944 *HOUSE OF DRACULA*, a monster showcase.



Christopher Lee, dynamic in Hammer Films' 1958 version, dubbed *HORROR OF DRACULA* in the U.S.



Louis Jourdan as *COUNT DRACULA*, public broadcasting's respectful but dull British stuff-and-mount job.



George Hamilton, the debonair Dracula who proved a comic hit in 1979's *LOVE AT FIRST BITE*.

though without the "strange intonation."

Lee was also afforded the luxury of allowing the character's monstrous side to show fully. Abetted with dripping fangs and red contact lenses, Lee was able to portray Dracula's ferocity to the hilt. Also, in keeping with the novel, Dracula is never naively accepted into the society of his victims; instead, after the characterization is established in the early scenes at his castle, he becomes almost a background character, infiltrating his victims' homes like some spy from the grave.

In some ways, what Lee did with the role set a pattern that has been followed ever since. With almost each new version of the tale, filmmakers claim to go back to the novel for their inspiration, and very often they do capture elements missed by previous versions. However, it's as if the momentum of the character's evolu-

tion overpowers attempts at being faithful to the source. Lee's interpretation is in some ways more true to the book than Lugosi's was (one *could* imagine him leading troops against the Turks); nevertheless, he continues in the tradition of making Dracula increasingly human and attractive, less obviously a threat from a foreign land. Also, his approach to his female victims, who now consciously awaited his caresses, emphasized the erotic as never before.

Throughout a series of sequels which bore little resemblance to Stoker, Lee managed to keep the integrity of his interpretation intact (though for some reason he never used the same speaking voice again, opting instead for a slow, sepulchral tone).

In 1971 Lee became the only actor ever to star in two adaptations of the novel. *COUNT DRACULA*, directed by Jess Franco, despite claims of being completely faithful, is a complete mess, in which Lee ap-

Every night he rises from his coffin-bed silently to seek the soft flesh, the warm blood he needs to keep himself alive!



Dracula
Adults only X

Christopher Lee, the only other actor besides Bela Lugosi in a long line of Draculas, to make much of a stir in the role, in the 1958 color British version.

peared only for the opportunity to play the character as his creator wrote him. For the first time, Dracula is portrayed as an old man with a mustache who grows younger throughout the story as he drinks blood. Moreover, much of Dracula's dialogue was retained, allowing him to expound on his family's bloody history as guardians against the infidel Turk (of course, when Dracula is pretending to talk about an ancestor who fought the Turkish army, he is actually talking about himself; not coincidentally, his exploits bear a certain resemblance to the authentic history of the real Vlad Dracula).

Lee makes the most he can of the opportunity, but the shabby production values defeat him in the end, and he blows the famous line, "Listen to them—the children of the night. What music they make!" (Score one for Lugosi.) One amusing costume decision illustrates the dangers of trying too hard to be faithful: under the mispercep-

tion that the cloak was not part of Stoker's creation, Lee conspicuously avoids wearing one, making Dracula stand out like a sore thumb in Victorian London, where true to the fashion of the time, the rest of the male cast wear evening clothes and capes.

In retrospect, the '70s look like a golden era for Stoker, with no less than five adaptations of the novel. More than numbers, the decade also brought to fruition the trend started at Hammer. The element of sexual attraction between vampire and victim became more explicit, and over the years Dracula's female victims have succumbed with increasing willingness. No longer corrupting innocence, the vampire became an agent to release repressed desire. Once a recognized evil, the villain of a repressive Victorian society, Dracula emerged as a sympathetic anti-hero for a modern age.

After the misbegotten *COUNT DRACULA*, the Jack



Frank Langella in Universal's 1979 big-budget color and widescreen remake, based on the Broadway hit that turned Stoker's monster into a romantic hero.

Palace tele-version in 1973 is a distinct improvement, though the limits of its television production values insure that it falls well short of being the definitive version. Richard Matheson's script contains some interesting ideas, but none are well enough developed to be more than brief asides: for the first time, an explicit connection is made between Stoker's fictional character and his historic source, with Palance appearing as Vlad the Impaler in brief flashbacks; additionally, these 15th-century snippets portray an anguished Dracula being forcibly separated from a beloved woman, who bears a striking resemblance to his 19th-century victim, Lucy Westenra, adding an element

of pathos to the plot. Palance, best known as the villain in SHANE until his CITYSLICKERS Academy Award, does a good job of playing a Dracula both tortured and fierce. The film is noteworthy for being the first DRACULA to grant its title character some measure of sympathy.

In 1978, MASTERPIECE THEATRE gave us a three-part mini-series entitled COUNT DRACULA. Although at three hours this adaptation could afford to be the most faithful so far, the influence of the '20s play can still be felt in its actor's performance, which emphasizes sophisticated aristocracy almost to the exclusion of menace. Star Louis Jourdan, with his French accent and suave charm, would per-

fectly fit the sedate vampire mold fashioned by Anne Rice. The videotaped production failed to do justice to Stoker's imagery.

If the 1970s were the golden decade, then 1979 was the banner year, with three screen incarnations of Dracula. In the comic LOVE AT FIRST BITE, George Hamilton could play off the Lugosi image for laughs and turn the Count into a romantic leading man, a sort of old-fashioned champion of romantic ideals. NOSFERATU THE VAMPYRE retained the look of Max Schreck's original, but Klaus Kinski portrayed the character as a doomed, tragic figure who must endure the futility of his existence century after century. Werner Herzog's remake may be arty and pretentious, but it does help illustrate how much the image of Dracula has changed over the years: in 1922, the vampire was nothing more than a horrible mannequin pushed around by the director to terrorize an audience; by 1979, he had become a character of flesh and blood, more pitiful than terrible.

The trend of humanizing Dracula into a figure of fascination and/or sympathy found its greatest expression so far in Universal's 1979 remake. In the title role, Frank Langella was not terrifying, but enthralling. His every move is perfect, his expressions and intonations charming. He moves with the smooth certainty of a being beyond mere mortal nature, who can ride a horse in hypnotizing slow-motion grace or climb easily down walls without ever threatening his dig-

nity. And he is, in the words of his intended bride, "the saddest and the kindest of all."

The Langella adaptation is based more on the play than the novel, with Langella the latest advance in the evolutionary path begun by Lugosi. Not merely a villain one might believably invite into one's living room, he is a villain the audience might want to see victorious, especially because the heroes of the story, Jonathan Harker and Professor Van Helsing, are motivated less by moral conviction than personal vendettas (jealous fiance and vengeful father, respectively). The novel's concept of good and evil is rendered ambiguous by scenes of the Count withstanding a crucifix and accusing Van Helsing of "Sacrilege!"

Director John Badham's attempt to orchestrate a romantic, almost operatic version of the tale strikes a bum note when the film remembers to be just a horror movie. The 20th-century setting of the play is for the first time put to true advantage: the old Victorian morality is dying, and Dracula represents the new, permissive morality that will replace it. Dracula may appear to be defeated yet again at the conclusion; but Lucy's knowing smile, as his cloak floats away, gives the clear impression not only that we know he will be back but that we know we want him back. And when he does return this Thanksgiving, in the person of Gary Oldman, all indications are that we will see the romantic apotheosis of the character, with the most passionate and sympathetic portrayal so far. □

Christopher Lee (r) as COUNT DRACULA (1970), a threadbare version undertaken by Lee because it sought to be faithful, for the first time, to Stoker.





“When you do ‘Dracula,’ the advance word has to be that the guy who plays him is great,” Coppola said. “I have that in Gary Oldman, a young actor with bravado.”

YOUR EARS. I felt he had the range—he’s a real actor—so I put my faith with him. Obviously, when you do DRACULA, the advance word has to be that the guy who plays Dracula is great, and I feel I have that. I think he’s to be applauded for what he did—a young actor—to take on something like this, with such bravado.”

One of Coppola’s goals for his interpretation of the book was to come up with a new look, actually several new looks, for the Count. “One of the things we allowed ourselves to do was to say, ‘Dracula can be green fog, a bat or a batman—no pun intended—or he can be a handsome guy.’ So we explored the possibilities.” This approach extended not only to the makeup but also to the costumes by Eiko Esioka (CLOSET LAND).

“Since we had these beautiful, young actors, and they were going to be our jewels that we were offering, I thought it would be interesting if we emphasized the costumes and not the sets,” said Coppola. “I got involved with a very imaginative person to design the costumes. Through the give-and-take of exploring the theme—Dracula was a kind of Byzantine prince, in the Balkans between the Turkish influence and the West—we ultimately came up with a design that was never seen before and therefore partly relates to the question, ‘What could you do with DRACULA that was new?’ I don’t think people, when they see the film,

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Gary Oldman as Dracula, in makeup by Greg Cannom and Matthew Mungle. When Dracula learns that Mina is leaving him to return to Jonathan Harker, the vampire turns demonic as he uses his dark powers to summon up a terrible thunderstorm.

COPPOLA'S DRACULA

DIRECTING THE HORROR EPIC

For Francis Coppola, the key to mounting Stoker's classic was finding a new angle.

*By Steve
Biodrowski*

"I knew *Dracula*, the book, from when I was a drama counselor at camp," said Francis Ford Coppola. "When I was 18, I was responsible for a bunk of nine-year-old boys and I used to read them to sleep. I thought Bram Stoker's *Dracula* would be appropriate for little boys—give them so-called good literature that was in the horror genre.

"I therefore knew that the famous film of DRACULA, the Lugosi version, wasn't really so much like the book. In addition, as a kid having seen Dracula as one of the trilogy of monsters—Dracula, Frankenstein and the Wolfman—I had looked up Dracula in the encyclopedia and was very thrilled to find out that he was a real figure, that he had actually lived. You know how sometimes you know something about a subject that's generally famous, but you feel you know the *real* information—you go around feeling like you're on the inside of something. People talk about Dracula, but do they know he was a Rumanian Prince named Vlad Dracula, who impaled people just to let the Turks



Coppola directs Gary Oldman as Dracula, turned-youthful, in London to pursue Mina under an assumed name, filmed on a street set on the backlot at Universal.

know how scary he was?

"So, when Winona Ryder asked me to read this script, I immediately said, 'Is it the real Bram Stoker *Dracula*? She said, 'Oh, yes.' I read it with a smirk, thinking, 'Let's see if this is the real thing.' Pretty much it was. That endeared me to it. I thought it was interesting subject matter for me to tackle. It had an actor interested; it was viable; and it was a kind of film I'd never made

before, in the horror genre. I'd worked for Roger Corman for many years, but I'd never actually made this type of film. All those reasons inspired me to do it."

The director found that making a faithful version of a story so often adapted unfaithfully presented its own share of problems. "It's a challenge," he admitted. "Obviously, a lot of the reasons for the way they did the previous versions made sense—it is hard to contain the whole story. Secondly, in a piece that has such imagery—every kid knows you put on a black cloak and some teeth and you're Dracula—I was curious: could I come up with a take on this that would have its own look and hopefully be the one that becomes

the classic DRACULA? You hope when you make a big movie, with lots of actors, sets and costumes, that there's an opportunity, if you mix the ingredients right, to come up with a totally unique brew. And if there's some emotion and passion at the root of it, you might have something that can last."

Coppola is confident that he has come up with a unique approach to the subject matter.



Dracula turns into a bat to escape.

"The film is quite unusual," he said. "The only danger of this approach is that the lay audience thinks they know all about Dracula. So they think they know the rules. They think if the vampire gets up in the daylight he turns to dust. Well, that's not in Stoker. Vampires can move around in the day; they just don't have their powers. In an odd sense, everyone thinks they can know everything there is to know about it; yet, if you take this book as the definitive telling of the tale, then they don't know it. So, here's a chance to do a modern film with modern stars—young, attractive people who can express the passion underlying this kind of myth—



The scene, not found in the script, was added when Coppola found himself impressed with makeup designer Greg Cannom's suggestion for a Dracula-to-bat incarnation.

and do it all anew."

Another consideration for Coppola was that the popular image of vampires has been irrevocably altered in the mass consciousness by the work of Anne Rice, who replaced Stoker's Christian allegory with contemporary existential angst. Coppola termed Rice's work "very modern, exciting and vivid—much more modern and vivid than this old book," he said, pointing to Stoker. "But this old book is *the* book. I'm a great admirer of Anne Rice. If somebody had come up to me and said, 'Do you want to do *Interview with the Vampire* or *Dracula*?' maybe I would have considered both, but that wasn't the choice they

gave me. It was: 'Are you interested in doing *Dracula*?' and I said, 'If I can do it more like the original.'

"In a lot of ways, *Interview with the Vampire* is a greater novel, notwithstanding the lasting impact of *Dracula*. Rice's book is great, I think, with some of the modern sensibilities that are in it—the equation of passion with blood. The thing about it is that you really get inside the mind of vampires, almost as though you are one; you understand what it's like to have that hunger; you really get to be one of them."

In this context, adapting the Victorian sensibility of the novel for today's audience was, according to the director, a

matter of emphasizing the romantic aspects. "The writer [Jim Hart] augmented Bram Stoker with some of the history of the real Vlad—that he had a beloved who killed herself when she heard that he'd died in battle. The film's extremely faithful, but with that one exception: that it explores the love story. I think that passion, the human part of it, is somewhat universal. That passionate part of Gary [Oldman]'s performance, in relationship to the character Winona [Ryder] plays, comes off contemporary in that it's understandable and moving. I hope I was able to achieve that, so that, unlike the other *Draculas* I've seen, this one has the horror,



"Could I come up with a take on this that would have its own look and hopefully be the one that becomes the classic? The audience expects to see a guy in a black cloak."



Coppola directs Winona Ryder as Mina, Jonathan Harker's fiancée. It was Ryder who got the film rolling by bringing Jim Hart's screenplay to Coppola's attention.

but it also has the romance.”

Fortunately for horror *aficionados*, the emphasis on romance doesn't mean that the horror has been de-emphasized. “I remember when my friend Billy Friedkin was working on *THE EXORCIST*, I said to him, when I hadn't read the book, ‘Oh, isn't that interesting! You're going to deal with the whole metaphor of exorcism and psychology.’ He said, ‘Screw that! You're gonna see it! There's gonna be no psychology; you're gonna look face-to-face at it.’ I would

never have thought of doing that; if I'd read the book, I would have understood that's the way it was. But I thought of everything as a metaphor for how people really are—which, of course, it still is. But the idea of looking right at some of the stuff and having it spit at you is the great thing that Billy did that's so memorable. I confess to having been a little influenced by that. You look right at [the horror in *DRACULA*].”

Of course, William Friedkin avoided applying the genre label to his film, but Coppola

doesn't mind calling *DRACULA* a horror film, “except that the love story is such a big part of it—that's what hits people as much as the horror. Gothic romance is what I consider it. Isn't that what you'd consider the novel? It has horror elements, for sure. I mean, I'd call it a horror film, but it's a horror film that's also a love story—God help me!”

Trying to explain the continuing appeal of Stoker's immortal character, Coppola speculated, “It's such an icon of our culture now. Originally, as a kid, I always thought Dracula was the scariest of all monsters. I was more scared of Dracula than of Frankenstein—mainly because kids were comforted with the thought that they could probably outrun Frankenstein. But Dracula was weird—he wanted to suck your blood, and he could change into things. Dracula is more in your subconscious and has to do with your hidden desires. I mean there's so much written about this topic that you don't need me. I don't have a lot of interesting theories. I just basically tried to do a production of *Dracula*, the book.

“I find that—this is my opinion, and my opinions are dif-

ferent than a lot of people—basically this whole business of making movies is about taking a project and giving it life. When I did *THE GODFATHER*, the only reason I got the job was that people felt gangster movies were so limited that you couldn't do anything new with them. The real fact of why I got the job wasn't that I was so hot at the time, but a lot of people had turned it down, because they felt it had that problem. But if you're successful and bring something to life, then suddenly *those* are the new rules. So the issue to me isn't ‘Oh, what am I going to do? Here's this *DRACULA* thing—everyone's going to expect a guy in a black cloak and the kind of stuff they've seen before, so for sure I'll fail.’ Rather, I say, ‘Maybe I can bring it to life in a way it was never brought to life before, and they'll remember *my* version.’ That's not to say other problems aren't difficulties to be overcome, but I think the main difficulty with any movie or anything related to art is: can you make something with its own heartbeat? If you're successful with that, then a lot of the other problems fall by the wayside.” □

Coppola directs Anthony Hopkins as Van Helsing, Dracula's learned nemesis.





“Gary Oldman reminds me a little bit of Bela Lugosi,” said director Francis Coppola. “I didn’t discourage it. He takes the role to places that Bela never got to.”

will say, ‘It’s the same, old thing.’ They may say, ‘Oh my god, it’s overwhelming!’ But I do feel we took a shot at a fresh interpretation.”

Striving for a fresh interpretation, however, did not necessarily mean avoiding elements that had been used before. “I never had that as a goal,” said Coppola. “The film is definitely its own weird animal, so I just didn’t feel that the originality was going to be a problem. Once I got a tact, I wasn’t so conscious of avoiding little overtones. Gary reminds me a little bit of Bela Lugosi, and I didn’t discourage it. I mean, he takes the performance to places Bela never got to.”

Coppola assigned second-unit director and son Roman Coppola to research how in-camera effects were achieved in old silent films and even in such later works as Cocteau’s *ORPHEUS* and *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*. Noted the director, “I defined the tricks, and there aren’t that many of them:



Hopkins as Van Helsing, having difficulty convincing his comrades that Lucy Westenra is a vampire. Cary Elwes as Arthur Holmwood puts a gun to the professor’s head when Van Helsing suggests opening the coffin of Holmwood’s dead fiancée.

playing with camera speed, reversing the camera, artificial gravity, mirrors and multiple exposures.” The research not only revealed how to achieve what was in the script but also suggested new shots that were added during two-and-a-half months of pre-production and storyboarding.

“We did a shot of Keanu Reeves as Jonathan Harker walking down a corridor, and above him are a group of rats crawling upside-down, on a beam,” said Coppola. “We actually shot that in-camera: with the camera upside-down, we exposed the rats, with black velvet behind them; then we rolled the film back and had the

actor walk down the staircase. I’m proud of that shot, because it’s rare that a film would take the time to do that in-camera with a principal actor; luckily, with second unit, we were able to take the time. Realistically, you probably could have farmed it out, but the fact that we did it all in-camera made us feel we were crafting something from scratch.”

Shooting effects as part of principal photography created scheduling problems for the filmmakers, who didn’t have the luxury of delaying the work until post-production. “I came on the film five weeks prior to shooting,” recalled visual effects supervisor Alison Savitch. “On most films, you’re there several months before shooting. Basically, no action had been taken on the effects shooting, so I spent a lot of time in this little cubbyhole, planning extensively. It was a scary proposition.”

“Our biggest priority was Harker’s trip to Castle Dracula,” continued Savitch. “They were doing that with r.p. [rear-projection], so they scheduled r.p. before the models were even built of the Carpathian mountains, which were to be

seen outside the window of Harker’s carriage. We didn’t have a miniature; we didn’t even have a design for a miniature. We went to Fantasy II, and I asked Gene Warren if he could build a huge miniature of mountains and streams in a week—because we needed to shoot the background plates in a week so that we could have them in two weeks for principal photography. He laughed, but we got the shot.” Despite the headache of having to get the background plates completed before live action, Savitch preferred rear-screen projection to blue-screen matting. “We were not even allowed to say the ‘b.s.’ word,” she joked. “I’m not the biggest blue screen fan anyway, so I will generally opt for rear projection. I was happy when I heard that was not a word to be used on the set.”

Floor effects supervisor Michael Lantieri had a relatively easy time adapting to the low-tech approach, one with which he was familiar from his experience on *WHOFRAMED ROGER RABBIT?* Noted Lantieri, “On that film, we actually did a lot of low-tech stuff, like hidden rods, hidden cables and trap doors; then we

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Coppola on the set with son Roman (l), who supervised post-production work.



COPPOLA'S DRACULA

ADAPTING BRAM STOKER

Screenwriter Jim Hart on being faithful to Stoker, but with an eye toward historical detail and modern sensibilities.

By Steve
Biodrowski

With horror still a not quite reputable genre, some filmmakers, especially those in the mainstream, feel the need to provide rationalizations for tackling the genre. Usually, these take the form of statements attesting that, "It's not really a horror film." In the case of *DRACULA*, the justification is that this version is an absolutely faithful, completely original adaptation, with no relationship to its cinematic antecedents. In some measure, this position is valid (the script is more faithful to Bram Stoker than any other); yet at the same time, an examination of the history of on-screen Draculas shows that this new interpretation of the character is clearly the latest stage in a long evolution.

When asked the reason for adapting the novel, screenwriter Jim Hart pointed out that it has never been successfully done, adding, "Dracula's character has never been portrayed historically for what he was. In all the films—and believe me, there was a time and a place for Bela Lugosi, for Christopher Lee and for Frank Langella—the approach they took, unfortunately, was not what I saw in the novel. Dracula's not a blood-sucking beast," Hart insisted. "Dracula's not a



In a 15th-century sequence not found in Stoker, Hart has Gary Oldman as Vlad, Stoker's historical inspiration, returning home after defending Rumania and the Catholic Church from Turkish invaders.

horrible, blood-sucking monster that goes around ripping people's throats out. He's a very misunderstood, charismatic, tragic hero. Nobody's ever portrayed him that way.

"I tried not to rely on the movies as my guidepost, but on Stoker, history and Leonard Wolfe," Hart maintained, referring to the author of *An Annotated Dracula*. "I went back and researched the historical character of Dracula. In his homeland, he's a national hero. They don't particularly care for what the movies have done to him over the years. There are long passages in Stoker's novel when Dracula talks about his past, and what a noble past it is. That's what I went for—this elegant military strategist beyond belief, a great

hero who had fallen from grace and ultimately is looking for love and redemption."

It's an interesting interpretation, but it's a bit disingenuous of Hart to insist on it as an authentic translation of Stoker's concept. The truth is that Stoker's Dracula is a blood-sucking monster, whose cold touch and rank breath inspire a shudder of revulsion, and it is the films that have portrayed him as "elegant, charismatic and tragic." To borrow a thought from Hart's mentor, Leonard Wolf, who also wrote *A Dream of Dracula*, what Hart has done "is not difficult to do. By now, the Dracula legend, which is a composite of vampire folklore, bits and pieces of Stoker's novel and a turmoil of screen versions of it,

is so very much in the atmosphere of our age that it is easy to forget where one detail begins and another ends."

For example, one may question just how "noble" is the past that Dracula describes in the book (keep in mind that the Count, pretending to discuss an ancestor, is actually relating his own exploits). "When he was beaten back, [he] came again, and again, and again, though he had to come alone from the bloody field where his troops were being slaughtered... They said he thought only of himself. Bah! What good

are peasants without a leader?" As Wolf noted of the character in *A Dream of Dracula*, "[Stoker] brilliantly avoided building any sympathy for him. He does nothing, ever, to entice compassion. Instead, he is a thorough-going evil creature who drinks the blood of his victims because he likes doing what, in any case, it is his destiny to do."

This is not to say that Hart's interpretation of the character is invalid. Actually, his additions to Stoker's tale extend the character in interesting ways and help to update the Victorian novel for modern audiences. But it is amusing to hear the lengths to which Hart will go to deny the originality of his own inventions, claiming that they were all inspired, at the



Oldman as Dracula, discovered with Mina. Wrote Stoker, "Never did I imagine such wrath and fury."

very least, by little hints in the book. One of the most interesting elements of Coppola's version is the relationship between Mina and Count Dracula, who accosts her under an assumed name and enravels her with his mysterious charm until she falls madly in love with him. Bela Lugosi's version may have been a villain one would believably invite into one's living room. In Hart's erotically charged script, Mina does a good deal more than that with Dracula.

Hart claimed that the relationship was "heavily implied in Stoker's work. Mina's entire feeling about this creature that killed Lucy changes after the 'vampire wedding' when she shares blood with Dracula," maintained Hart. "She becomes very sympathetic and protective toward him. In a way, she's even a threat to the success of Van Helsing's attempts to track Dracula down and kill him. And at the end of the book, she has a child, which they take back to the scene of Dracula's death in Transylvania seven years later. I thought, 'What mother is going to take her child to the scene of this horrible, nightmarish incident if there's not some reverence for the beast?' My take is that it's Dracula's child and Mina's taking him back to see where

his father lived, which is a secret she can never share with anybody. Stoker had planted all these seeds in my mind for Mina's taboo love of Dracula."

Taking Hart's arguments point by point: Mina doesn't "share" blood with Dracula, she is forced like a kitten with its nose pushed into a saucer of milk to drink the blood of Dracula. He warns her that, if she resists, he will take her husband and "dash his brains out before your very eyes." Mina is a help not a hindrance to Van Helsing, because that "baptism of blood" gives her telepathic access to Dracula's brain. The only threat is that, because the telepathic link works both ways, Dracula might have access to Van Helsing's plans. Finally, in *The Annotated Dracula*, Wolf speculates on the possibility of Dracula's having fathered Mina's child, but he's forced to abandon the notion, because the child was not born until 13 months after Mina's last encounter with the Count. (Concluded Wolf, "I regret to say that Anton La Vey, San Francisco's resident Satanist, tells me that the devil's children by mortals spend the usual nine months *in utero*.")

Hart's script for Coppola's film also gets some mileage out of making Mina the reincarna-

tion of Vlad's wife. "Historically, Dracula lost his wife Elizabeth in 1462," Hart explained. "He was a great hero; he was a knight ordained to protect the Christian Church against any enemies of Christ. When the Turks overran Constantinople and were threatening all of Christendom, Dracula saved Christianity. In the process, his wife committed suicide, because she'd been told that Dracula had fallen in battle, that the Turks would capture and torture her. That's where I took license. That seemed to be the event that turned him against the Church. So we linked Mina and Elizabeth. Dracula's whole reason for coming out of exile in Stoker is to renew his life, to go to London and find life again. He says in the novel that 'I will love again.'" (Actually, he says, "I, too, can love.")

Calling Vlad Dracula a hero because he fought the Turks is a little bit like calling Stalin a hero because he fought the Nazis. Perhaps Saddam Hussein might be a better modern equivalent, considering his record of savagery against his own population, which earned him the epithet "Tsepes" (i.e., "the Impaler").

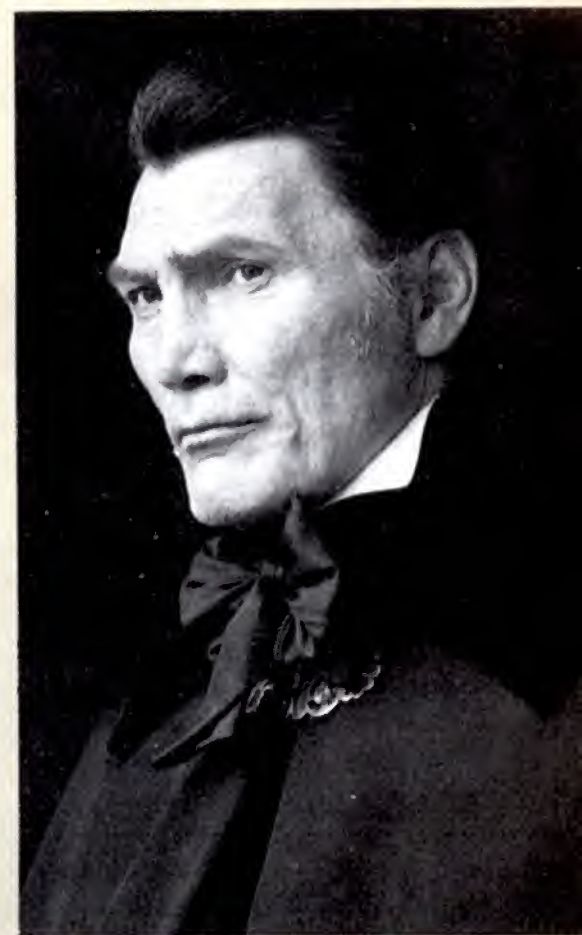
Curiously, Hart denied the similarities between his screenplay and Richard Matheson's



"Dracula's not a horrible, blood-sucking monster that goes around ripping people's throats out," said screenwriter Jim Hart. "He's a misunderstood, tragic hero."

teleplay, filmed by Dan Curtis in 1974, starring Jack Palance. Hart brushed any similarities aside by claiming that both are inspired by Stoker. "The reincarnation thing is not new," said Hart. "Leonard [Wolf] feels the same way. Leonard's work was all about Lucy being the reincarnation of Dracula's bride. In Stoker, it's implied that one of the brides looks like Lucy. I think the reincarnation is handled differently than it's ever been handled. In the novel, Dracula's fixation with the photoplate of Mina and Lucy that Harker shows him is another seed. It's as if he knew there was a destiny, which is

CITY SLICKERS' Jack Palance in a 1973 adaptation by Richard Matheson that paved the way for Hart's version.





At the Borgo Pass, Jonathan Harker (Keanu Reeves) waits for Dracula's carriage that will transport him to the castle.

why he goes to Whitby and takes Lucy there and then Mina."

Actually, Wolf only notes that Lucy *may* resemble Dracula's favored blond mistress. She can't possibly be a reincarnation, because the vampire bride is still very much alive. And a photoplate of Harker's fiance is not a plot device in Stoker. It was an invention of Murnau's in *NOSFERATU*, and it was reused in the remake. Rather ironically, Hart, who rails at other vampire films for tampering with Stoker's ending by killing Dracula with sunlight, considers *NOSFERATU* "the most faithful to what Stoker's about," ignoring that this is the film which invented the idea that a vampire is vulnerable to the sun.

Hanother big change in Hart's script, and one of its few glaring flaws, is the characterization of Lucy Westenra. In the book, she is an innocent, young woman corrupted by Dracula's bite into a seductive vampire. In the script, this stunning transformation is all but obliterated by turning Lucy into a promiscuous coquette. "I don't think so at all, not at all," Hart replied when asked if he thought his version of Lucy comes across

like a bimbo-slut.

"I don't think she's a slut at all," said Hart. "I think she's a liberated woman of the time, who sees that life's a ball. At least, that's my interpretation of the book. Lucy is this brazen, rich, spoiled prattler, who can get away with murder, who loves as many men as she can have, and who's experienced her own sexuality—and she pays the price for her wantonness and freedom, for being sexually promiscuous. Maybe she *is* a contemporary slut, but to me she's a mischievous Victorian girl who has wealth and no responsibility. I think of her maybe as a souped-up version of what was there, but my license was very little. Most of the dialogue Sadie [Frost] speaks is right out of Lucy's mouth. That whole speech about 'why can't a woman marry three men' is right out of Stoker."

Of course, in the book, the speech is nothing but a rhetorical question asked by the character after breaking the hearts of two close friends by turning down marriage proposals. Whereas Lucy in Hart's screen version is carrying on an affair with Quincy Morris while planning to marry Lord Arthur Holmwood because of his title. The book's character can barely get out from under the watchful gaze of her mother for a few

minutes so that Holmwood, whom she loves, can propose to her.

These diversions from the original text are minute when compared to changes wrought by previous variations. Perhaps the script's overall faithfulness makes them more apparent to the discerning eye, like flaws on the polished surface of an otherwise perfect gem. At any rate, the decision to sell this film as the authentic Stoker text drew a backlash from readers of the *Los Angeles Times*, who wrote letters calling the claim bogus. "These are people who haven't read the script or seen the movie, and they've already made up their minds," Hart complained of his detractors. "That's real research—a publicity blurb in

the *L.A. Times* gets the DRACULA critics out. But it is interesting that it will ignite that kind of response. I'm happy to see that. I will tell you that Dracula scholars—Leonard Wolf, Raymond McNally and Radu Florescu—have read the screenplay and given it enormous praise. I tried hard to be as faithful as I could, and that's what Francis has done."

Even while trying to be faithful to the source, would Hart at least acknowledge that the character has taken on a life of his own, evolving well beyond what his creator imagined? "There's no doubt that this is the best thing Stoker ever wrote," said Hart. "Whether wittingly or unwittingly, he created something that has survived nearly 100 years, and people are still putting their own spin on it and saying, 'I've done Dracula the way Stoker intended.'"

"I will never for the life of me understand why John Badham chose to put in a car chase and have Dracula die on ship as a giant bat-kite—even when this brilliant novel is sitting there with this spectacular climax on the Borgo Road, with the battle between the gypsies and the vampire hunters. John Ford would have loved this section—it would have been the greatest shoot-out since the *O.K. Corral*. I don't understand why they consistently go back to this brilliant novel and chop it up. My goal was to do right by Stoker and along the way put my own spin in there, because we somehow had to convince people to do it. That's what I hope we've done. I hope the Stoker-philes will be pleased by what they see." □

Screenwriter Jim Hart, on the set of *Castle Dracula* at Hollywood's Sony Studios.





“Stoker created something that has lasted nearly 100 years,” said Hart. “People are still putting their own spin on it, saying, ‘I’ve done Dracula the way Stoker intended.’”

covered it up with high-tech animation. The idea here was to create a feeling and an atmosphere, rather than showcase transformation effects or computer effects. Those are good and have a place in some movies, but Francis wanted everyone to feel a part of what’s going on, so it had to be done in a natural way. It’s in many ways a lot harder. We’re hoping for a great look to the picture. It should surprise a lot of people. I think they’re going to find it a real breath of fresh air, rather than being bombarded every minute with loud noise and morphing.”

Without computers, Lantieri’s crew relied on such simple techniques as jump-cuts and soft dissolves for an effect in which Dracula transforms into a swarm of rats, in much the same way that the exploding dummy replaced John Cassavetes for the conclusion of *THE FURY*. What appears to be a single continuous shot actually contains a jump-cut so that Gary Oldman could be replaced by a mechanical figure covered with real rats. To insure that the figure matched Oldman’s position, Lantieri’s crew built a registration matte, like an animation matte, that fit over the camera. The telescoping mechanical figure then collapsed to the floor, allowing the rats to scurry away.

A lot of effort also went into enhancing scenes which are not obvious effects set pieces, as when Jonathan Harker encounters the three vampire women in Castle Dracula. “We worked



Anthony Hopkins as Van Helsing. Right: Coppola directs Hopkins and Sadie Frost as the vampire-stricken Lucy Westenra.

very hard on the sensuous scene with Harker and the brides,” recalled Lantieri. “We tried very hard to make things look one way when, in reality, different things were happening via trap doors and air lines. The hardest part of doing something like that is making each individual piece flow continuously, so that it happens in a very natural way. Love scenes and death scenes are the hardest to do—you can get into trouble with both. Then, when you add the supernatural, you’re integrating another dimension, so we had our hands full.”

One thing that kept Lantieri’s hands full was Francis Coppola’s penchant for not restricting himself to the storyboards if he thought the effects could be improved on-set. “If he sees something that has potential, he’s very good about letting you develop it if you say, ‘This is great, but it can be better’ or ‘weirder.’ That was the big term—he wanted everything ‘weird.’ For example, we had what started out as a simple effect when Harker is coming to the castle and Dracula is driving the coach. In the script, it reads that Dracula reaches over, picks him up effortlessly, and puts him in the coach. You

read that and think you have to put Harker on wires, or, in our case, we opted for a counter-balance, like a teeter-totter, to lift Keanu and then pivot to get him into the coach.

“Francis saw it—the gag was exactly what it said in the script and worked perfectly—and said, ‘I think it can go further.’ We then proceeded to do a shot where the coach drives into closeup, and when Dracula reaches out, the camera pans with his arm, which seems to go forever and pick Harker up 20 feet away. We put the seat on a crane and dollyed the seat and Dracula over; as you pan

you’re just seeing the arm, which picks up Keanu and then comes all the way back. By the time you pan back off the arm, it appears as though Dracula has never moved.”

Although most of the on-set effects were covered by second-unit, some were handled by the first-unit crew. “Our cinematographer, Michael Balhaus, was a key part,” said Lantieri. “Certainly, in this circumstance, you work much closer with a cinematographer, because you’re controlling the light, the atmosphere, and the effects—you try to build layers

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Keanu Reeves as Harker meets his employer, Gary Oldman as the aged Dracula.



COPPOLA'S DRACULA

VAMPIRE EFFECTS

Designer Greg Cannom provided Coppola with a bloody baptism in makeup technology that stretched the limits.

By Steve Biodrowski

When a mainstream filmmaker turns to the horror genre, there is often a certain amount of self-restraint when it comes to utilizing graphic makeup effects, as if such shock techniques are somehow embarrassing or disreputable. Francis Ford Coppola, on the other hand, the director who achieved new levels of screen violence in *THE GODFATHER*, has no hesitation about pushing *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*'s blood and gore effects to the limits of an R-rating. In fact, one hallucinogenic shot (akin to Stanley Kubrick's elevator of blood in *THE SHINING*) features 6,000 gallons of blood filling a chapel as Dracula commits a blasphemous sacrilege that will damn his soul to undead life as a vampire.

Not all of the effects are quite that extreme, but the film does have its share of beheadings and stakings, along with a variety of looks for its title character. The work was designed in the laboratory by Greg Cannom (*THE EXORCIST III*) and applied on-set by Matthew Mungle (*THE GUARDIAN*). "I enjoy designing things myself, but I don't mind going on the set," Mungle explained of his working relationship with Cannom. "Greg goes on the set occasionally, but he likes to be back at the lab, designing every day."

Count Dracula has seven different looks in the film. The first two—his appearance in



Dracula in wolf form, Gary Oldman in makeup designed by Cannom and applied by Matthew Mungle. Coppola saw the elaborate effects as a loss of artistic control.

1462, before becoming a vampire, and his handsome appearance in London after regaining his youth—were handled by straight makeup artist Michele Burke. The other five are elaborate prosthetic makeups: 120 years old, bat, wolf, demonic and young wolf.

The most elaborate was the 12-piece old-age makeup, including nose and upper lip, eye bags and eyelids, ear tips and

earlobes, lower lip, a horse-shoe-shaped piece around the cheeks and under the chin for jowls, wrinkled pieces for the backs of the hands and fingertips. "Greg helped apply it the first time and on a few other occasions, because it really needed two people; then I did it several times by myself," said Mungle. "The first time we did it, it took about six hours; then we got the application time

down to four hours. When I had to apply it myself, I got it down to four and a half hours. I think Gary [Oldman] went into it 18 times; he was only supposed to go into it 12. He was tired of it, but he was just superb about it."

The other makeups were less difficult, although the wolf and bat appearances required full bodysuits. "For the wolf, we would take the bodysuit off and air it out," recalled Mungle. "The problem with the bat was that the back of the head, which we could re-use, and the face, were applied onto the bodysuit. It zipped up the back, and we had to glue him in. We could unzip it, but as far as air getting in—once a person was in it, he was sealed in. Gary [Oldman] only went into that one time; then he broke out because of his metabolism. So we had to put the stuntman into it four or five times. You couldn't tell it wasn't Gary. The only difficulty was finding someone with the correct facial shape; otherwise, it would look too full. But most of the stuff was long shots."

Applying the facial makeups was facilitated by Oldman's decision to shave his hairline back two inches, making baldcaps unnecessary to portray the character's hairline, which varied with each appearance. "Gary was just great," praised Mungle. "With production, sometimes he was a little bit difficult—he wouldn't deny that—as far as the way he acted. I don't blame him, because they would say, 'We



Gary Oldman in a full bodysuit for Dracula's transformation into a bat, designed by Greg Cannom and applied by Matthew Mungle. After the first day, Oldman turned the in-suit chores over to a stunt double.



Struggling with the Bowie knife of Quincey Morris in his heart, Dracula stumbles back toward his castle at the film's climax. Makeup artists Greg Cannom and Matthew Mungle devised a "demonic" look for the finale, costume design by Eiko Esioka.

need him in four hours, when you get through with makeup.' Well, we'd get through; then it would be two, three or four hours later that they'd use him, or they wouldn't use him at all. There were several times when he got enraged. But I would do the same thing after sitting four and a half hours."

Une of the film's more gruesome moments is the demise of Lucy Westenra, played by Sadie Frost. As her fiancée, Arthur Holmwood, impales her with a stake, she lurches up from her coffin and vomits blood on Professor Van Helsing, who promptly cuts off her head. The mechanics were devised by Larry O'Dean and hidden beneath an appliance sculpted by Mitch Devane. "It's not really elaborate, but Larry just did a beautiful job on the mechanics of it," Mungle explained. "The blood runs up the sides of her face and into her mouth, so there's a lot of volume. There's a little pin-

wheel that spins and disperses the blood out of the mouth. The whole appliance, which is just one prosthetic piece to hide the tubes, went under her eyes and on top of her nose, very much like Dick Smith did it [in *THE EXORCIST*].

"Sadie [Frost] couldn't talk. She had to have her mouth open the whole time. Once we applied it, which took 45 minutes, we told the A.D.s, 'She's ready—take her!' They had to use her immediately. The special effects guy hooked her up to the blood pump. She was lying down; she had to rise and throw up, then lie back. So some of the blood ran down her throat. We should have been a little bit more prepared; I should have gotten one of those suction devices that dentists use."

The decapitation of Lucy was filmed twice: once in a first unit long-shot, featuring the principal actors; then in a second unit insert closeup. The shot features a mechanical head by Larry O'Dean, with

moving eyes and jaw, attached to a body, with makeup hiding the cut-off point. "Originally, Francis wanted to do it in one shot: Anthony [Hopkins] picks up the knife and cuts off her head. Well, it's impossible for a person to hit a mark like that unless he's Steven Seagal. I think we did three takes. In the last one, he sliced her jaw in half, so the whole mechanical thing was screwed up. That was the end of that, so we had to come back one month later and re-do it for the second unit. We used the hand of one of the guys in the shop."

Noted Mungle, "In a situation like that, you have to at least state your mind in the first place, 'Okay, we'll try, but I warn you.' We couldn't necessarily go up to Francis and talk to him, because he was always thinking about other things. We had to talk to the producer, who would then go up to Francis and arrange an audience."

Although this might sound as if the director gave the makeup team short shrift,

Mungle pointed out that Coppola was open to incorporating their suggestions. "Greg would come up with stuff," said Mungle. "For example, the bat creature wasn't originally in the film, but Francis liked the maquette that Greg had done."

Mungle did not find the working conditions on *DRACULA* much different from those on many of the lower-budget films he has worked on. "You've got a little bit more time and money, but there were times when it seemed like a low-budget movie, 'Don't we have time to do this?' 'No, we need it today!' And then they'd end up using it two weeks later!"

"The guys in the lab had a lot of hard work to do, but on the set—that's where the heat comes down," continued Mungle. "If something doesn't work, who gets the blame? The person on the set. In the shop, Greg and I would go over everything, especially effects like the decapitation, but I didn't have too much time for testing. I always like to test the effects rather than make a fool of myself on the set, especially if it's first unit, with all the actors."

Nevertheless, Mungle enjoyed his tenure on *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*. "I was on the set every day for six months—September to February," he recalled. "I was always doing something. They had second unit going the whole time, so if I wasn't doing makeup on Gary, I was doing it on a double. It was a great experience. A lot of people didn't have a good time, but I didn't mind it at all. It was good working with Francis. I think this was the first time [he had worked with prosthetics]. He knew what he wanted, but it was an ordeal for him to get over the idea that it takes four hours to put it on. That's the nature of the beast."

"I think it's a unique look—Greg's got a real style about all the creatures he does," concluded Mungle. "I think it's a better approach than other Draculas we've seen. A lot of people are going to be fighting it, because they like the old standards, but this thing's been done so many times before that we wanted to do something new." □



“We’d get through making up Gary Oldman after four hours,” recalled Mungle. “Then it would be three or four hours later that they’d use him. Sometimes he got enraged.”

of things, as we did in *HOOK*, to keep everyone’s eyes off the fact that there’s a stage wall or a backing in our case.

“We did quite a bit of this new Arriflex camera Michael [Balhaus] uses that rolls backwards and hits a mark perfectly,” Lantieri continued. “You can program in a frame, roll forward, and then roll backward right to that frame. So there are things happening in reverse that we took to an extreme. Lucy in her wedding gown, when she’s carrying the baby in the chapel, comes down the stairs with this odd, waddling, undead walk. In reality, we wired her dress, this huge train, and pulled it up a step at a time as she walked up the stairs in reverse. You play that forward, and you get this odd walk that’s not recognizable. It’s not a change of speed; it’s an odd feeling.”

With both units keeping him busy, Lantieri finally



Mina (Winona Ryder) mourns for Dracula, at peace at last. Coppola’s version laces Stoker’s horror with an epic love story.

found himself running back and forth between them. “I had someone on first unit and someone on second unit. I basically just tried to set up the gags beforehand, show them to Francis, and then be in the right place at the right time as they were happening—because Francis is very innovative, and things change very rapidly, so whenever he made a change, we had to make a change.”

A simple technique put to extensive use during shooting was a 50/50 mirror, also known as “ghost glass.” When placed at a 45-degree angle, the mirror allows the camera to

photograph both what’s visible through the glass and what’s reflected on its surface. When Dracula appears in Renfield’s room in the asylum, Gary Oldman stood off to the side of the set against a black background while a balancing light was gradually brought up on him, making his transparent image appear in the scene.

Perhaps the most interesting use of this technique is the so-called “green-mist puppet” effect, jokingly named after an early test. “Dracula has a number of manifestations,” Savitch explained. “Sometimes, he’s in Transylvania, and you’ll see him at Hil-

lingham as a shadow. One particularly ambitious shot was our green mist, showing him crawling and creeping. We all thought it was funny when Roman [Coppola] said he wanted to do this green mist in-camera.”

Recalled Roman Coppola, “We couldn’t figure out how to get the mist to act the way we wanted, so we had a black mock-up of a section of the set and a 50/50 mirror in front of the camera. It’s not a puppet, but we did a test with a puppet.”

Continued Savitch, “We started off with puffy clouds

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Makeup artist Matthew Mungle (l) attaches a hand appliance for Dracula’s old age makeup to actor Gary Oldman, in the makeup trailer at Sony Studios. Designer Greg Cannom (r) observes as Mungle and an assistant position the headpiece. The actor, who shaved his hairline to facilitate the makeups, was termed a “trouper.”



COPPOLA'S HORROR ROOTS

Director Francis Coppola on his movie beginnings, filming low-budget horror for the legendary Roger Corman.

By Steve Biodrowski

To those who know him only for his many Academy Award-nominated efforts, from *THE GODFATHER* series to *THE CONVERSATION* to *APOCALYPSE NOW*, Francis Ford Coppola may seem like an unexpected choice to helm a horror effort; actually, his roots in the genre go all the way back to the early '60s, when Roger Corman gave Coppola his first job out of UCLA Film School, at \$90 a week.

"I had bought a Russian science fiction film," Corman recalls. "I wanted to re-edit it and dub it in English, so I called UCLA and asked them to recommend some of their top graduates. Francis was one of them and we chose him." While working days as dialogue director on one of the Poe films, Coppola, who spoke no Russian, stayed up nights writing new English dialogue for the Russian film; then shot a brief scene, at Corman's request, of two monsters fighting; and dubbed and re-edited the entire effort into *BATTLE BEYOND THE SUN* (1962), for which Coppola received his

Corman, circa the early '60s, when he hired Coppola fresh out of UCLA.



Coppola's early lesson in period Gothic horror. Corman hired Coppola to flesh-out footage of *THE TERROR* shot on sets left over from *THE RAVEN* (1963).

first screen credit, as associate producer.

Shortly thereafter, Corman took a respite from his Poe series to make *THE YOUNG RACERS* in Europe, a film about Grand Prix racing. Sensing a golden opportunity, Coppola offered to work as sound man, which indirectly led to his directorial debut. "I had my best staff ever: Francis, Menahem Golan and Bob Towne," recalled Corman. "And we had all of our equipment built into a Volkswagon microbus. It was the first, to my knowledge, self-contained shooting unit. At the close of that picture, I was supposed to come back to America. A thought occurred to me: we had our skeleton crew there; we had all our equipment built into the microbus; all of this was already paid for, so it would be very inexpensive to make a second picture."

"I knew Roger could never resist a bargain," said Cop-

pola. "When he went someplace to make a film for AIP, he always figured, with the equipment and crew there, maybe he could make a second one for himself. In this case, he was called back to make what actually turned out to be a pretty wonderful film, *THE RAVEN*. He was going back, so I said to him, 'If I come up with an idea, can I make a movie?'"

Menahem Golan, also eager to direct a feature, pitched his own idea to Corman. "We were following the Grand Prix races around Europe, and the last race we were at was in Liverpool," Corman explained. "Menahem came up with an idea to put everything on a boat and ship it to Tel Aviv, because he's from Israel. I said to Francis, 'I'm not sure I want to ship everything to Israel. We're right across the Irish Sea from Dublin. It's an overnight trip. You could be in Dublin by the morning after we finish shooting. There was a problem

about shooting in England, because the labor laws are very strict, and we had limited work permits. As a matter of fact, our permits said we were shooting a documentary about the races—they didn't know we were shooting a feature. I figured all we need to do was finish and get out of England. But there were no such requirements in Ireland."

After the shooting that day, Coppola went to his hotel room and wrote a brief treatment for a Hitchcock-type psychological thriller to be called *DEMENTIA*. "I just wrote the one scene, where the woman jumps in the pond, comes face-to-face with the little girl's grave, and then gets axed to death," said Coppola. "It was spawned in the aftermath of *PSYCHO* and *HOMICIDAL*. Roger gave me \$20,000 to make the movie."

Recalled Corman, "I approved the treatment and said, 'Okay, take everything to Ireland.' He did, and raised some additional money from an English producer, who bought the European rights. He shot the film with my crew, some of the actors from my picture [William Campbell, Patrick Magee and Luana Anders]. They rented a big house, just outside Dublin, where everybody lived, and shot the film."

Having been invited to a film festival in Yugoslavia, Corman could not hang around to keep an eye over Coppola's shoulder, but the producer had no worries about trusting the neophyte director. "Francis had worked with me on a couple of films, and he'd done an outstanding job on *THE*

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DEMEN- TIA 13

WHICH ONE IS THE KILLER?



RICHARD Brooding what, being a deep secret
LOUISE Willing to do any thing to gain torture
DR. CALLEN Was he worth getting his own zone?
BILLY Wiped to the mys- tery of the castle
LADY HALDRAN Is she re- venging the death of Kathleen
PATRICK MAGEE (Thee) DUNN
starring **WILLIAM CAMPBELL · LUANA ANDERS · BART PATTON · MARY MITCHELL**
Produced by ROGER CORMAN. Written and Directed by FRANCIS COPPOLA. An AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL RELEASE. A FILMGROUP Presentation

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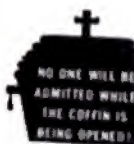


A NEW CLASSIC OF HORROR COMES TO THE SCREEN!

BORIS KARLOFF

THE TERROR

COLOR AND VISTASCOPE



NO ONE WILL BE ADMITTED WHILE THE COFFIN IS BEING OPENED!

STARRING **JACK NICHOLSON AND SANDRA KNIGHT**. PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY **ROGER CORMAN**
SCREENPLAY BY **LEO GORDON AND JACK HILL**. A FILMGROUP PRESENTATION. AN AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL PICTURES RELEASE

Left: Coppola's horror film directing debut for Corman, filmed in Ireland in 1962 with equipment and crew left over from Corman's THE YOUNG RACERS. Right: Coppola directed scenes with Jack Nicholson.

YOUNG RACERS. I had some talks with him, but I had total faith in him. I did come to the set after I came back from Yugoslavia. I looked at the rushes, saw everything was going all right; then I went back to the United States."

The resulting film owed a lot to its black-and-white photography and Irish locations for its atmosphere. The pacing is slow, and the plot obviously inspired by PSYCHO, but the horror scenes are genuinely effective. "For a little \$40,000 movie, it was okay," Coppola conceded. "I wrote it literally in three days, shot for nine days on stage and ten on location. When it came out, I was just thrilled to have made a movie. I remember a review in *The New York Times*. I was thrilled because it said, 'under the solid direction of Francis Coppola.' My brother looked at it and said, 'Francis, it

doesn't say "solid," it says "stolid.'" I was crushed."

After Coppola finished the film, two additions were made. The first was the number "13" appended to its title, in order to avoid confusion with a previous film entitled DEMENTIA. The second was additional footage shot by Coppola's friend and fellow UCLA graduate Jack Hill. "To our great surprise, the film was short, so Jack Hill wrote and directed an additional five minutes to bring it up to the minimum length we needed to call it a feature," said Corman, who can no longer recall exactly what the footage was. Tim Lucas, in *Video Watchdog* No. 5 claims Hill added some grisly inserts, whereas Gary Kurtz (producer of STAR WARS) told author Ed Naha in *The Films of Roger Corman* that the five extra minutes were "a stupid pro-

logue that had nothing to do with the rest of the movie... a psychiatrist giving the audience a test to see if they were mentally fit to see the picture."

Coppola himself was not available to shoot the additional footage, because he was in Yugoslavia, working on a film Corman had set up during his trip to the film festival. "I talked with these people who said that if I would put up a little money and send some American actors they would shoot in English and I would get all the English-speaking rights. So I sent along William Campbell and Patrick Magee. Francis went along as a production coordinator, just to see that everything worked out."

Said Coppola, "I don't know what my role was. I wasn't a supervisor, because it was a whole Yugoslavian production, and I was just a kid.

But I had brought the two American co-stars, and I was supposed to look out for Roger's interests, which I did to the best of my abilities."

The film was OPERATION: TITIAN (named after the theft of a Titian artwork), and wouldn't really bear mentioning in a discussion of Coppola's genre efforts if it had ever been released in its original form. However, Corman deemed the Yugoslavian print unreleasable when it arrived and ordered extensive new footage shot by Jack Hill, who turned the picture into a horror film known as BLOOD BATH, which was then re-shot again and turned into TRACK OF THE VAMPIRE by Stephanie Rothman.

Coppola's last horror effort for Corman was THE TERROR. Corman had shot two days with Boris Karloff and Jack Nicholson on sets still standing from THE RAVEN.



Jack Nicholson and Sandra Knight in Corman's set photography for *THE TERROR*. Coppola shot Nicholson later at *Big Sur*.

With Karloff back home in England, Corman needed Coppola to shoot exterior footage with Nicholson which would hopefully integrate into a whole movie. "I shot about a week with Jack Nicholson up in *Big Sur*," recalled Coppola. "I did the stuff with the wife and horse by the ocean. It was sort of a hopeless project because Roger had shot these interiors, and in the scenes this young guy, played by Jack Nicholson, is in this castle and people don't want him there, but all these things happen to keep him there. So it was a real puzzle." After shooting his

footage, Coppola got a contract from Seven-Arts; Corman released him from the assignment and brought on Monte Hellman to fit the pieces together.

When asked what lessons Coppola learned from working with him, Corman remained modest. "I think he learned to work efficiently, within the confines of a budget and a schedule—something he's not known for today, but which he *can* do," said Corman. "I think Francis is the director he is today because of his own innate talents; I couldn't teach him that. All I can say is that I

gave him a little bit of a start early in his career. I'm certain that, if he had never met me, he would have been just as successful. It just might have taken him a little longer."

L Coppola gives a slightly different perspective of what he gleaned from his years with Corman. "He was really no-nonsense," said Coppola of Corman. "He made movies almost like an engineer: no frills—just do the formula fast and cheap, and give the audience what they want. I have never really done that in my career. I get involved in my own feelings about the material, which is my problem and my blessing."

On the other hand, Coppola avowed that his studio-bound approach to *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA* is similar to Corman's studio-bound Poe series. "Oh, totally!" he said of the stylish but unrealistic look. "That was obviously something I was remembering from the tradition that I consider myself in. It's not like one of those teenage horror movies with the axe murderer running around in a basement, and you're really afraid he's going to get you."

"I think our audiences are

different today than they were 30 years ago, in that they've seen all these slasher movies, so they've been through a decade of somewhat realistically gory, grueling movies, as opposed to Roger Corman movies of the Poe era, which were much more Gothic romance."

Since the Corman years, Coppola has occasionally dabbled in science fiction and fantasy (*CAPTAIN EO* and *PEGGY SUE GOT MARRIED*), and Stephen King even listed *APOCALYPSE NOW* as one of the ten best horror films of 1979 in a *Rolling Stone* article, but it took the director 30 years to do his first Gothic horror film.

Coppola claimed he is a fan of the genre. "I was when I was young, certainly, and I loved working for Roger Corman during that era," he said. Then why did it take so long to do a film like *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*? "Well, I'm a professional film director, who also wishes he could be a person who writes his own original screenplays, like Woody Allen. But I have these other trainings. I was in theatre, I've done opera and I love stagecraft. I had my own studio, which I wanted to make a place where we did a lot of productions of different types, and I love fantasy, science fiction and horror. Yet, at the same time, I'd like to write things like *THE CONVERSATION* and more personal stuff."

"It's a matter of the luck and the time and ability to be able to call your own shots," said Coppola. "Since the failure of *ONE FROM THE HEART*, I've been swept up in the jet stream of undoing that. I haven't had a chance to just sit down and write something—it takes so long to write an original piece, and usually I have to be working to keep my company alive and myself and my family. So it's a matter of what opportunities are offered to me that I wish I could do. I wasn't as nuts to do a Western, but I was always interested in science fiction and horror. So, obviously, when someone says, 'Do you want to do a horror film?' or 'Do you want to do a science fiction film?' I say, 'Oh, yeah, I want to!'" □

William Campbell as the mad artist in Coppola's *PSYCHO* riff *DEMENTIA 13*.





"... it will be a blessed hand for her that shall strike the blow that sets her free," wrote Bram Stoker of the staking of Lucy. Instructed by Van Helsing, Arthur Holmwood (Cary Elwes) prepares to strike the blow that will release his fiancée-turned-vampire, while Van Helsing (Anthony Hopkins) is poised to cut off her head.

on rigs that we tested against the mirror. All of us were saying, 'This isn't going to work.' When we saw the first test, it had this ghostly effect—it wasn't exactly mist, but it looked pretty good. Later, we ended up using dry ice and lit that with green gels; by using the mirror to put that element into the real set, the actors wouldn't be lit green. You could fade it in and make it as prominent or as light as possible. Some we even shot backwards, so that it crawled in an unnatural way that no real mist could do. Normally, you would use animation, like in *INDIANA JONES*. In this case, I wasn't sure, but after the tests, I thought, 'Ohmygod, Roman did it!'"

Although the director used his share of squibs and blood in *THE GODFATHER* movies, *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA* was Francis Ford Coppola's first experience with extensive prosthetic makeup effects. "Yeah, I don't know what I think!" he laughed

about the ordeal. "It has a life of its own. It's very hard to control, because when you nod yes to an idea, you don't realize that the next time you run into that idea, they're saying, 'It's going to take six hours.' Then they bring it out; you look at it; and whatever it is, you're stuck with it. In this production, a lot of the concepts and designs were being done concurrently with the shooting. One day, they'd bring in this wolf creature and say, 'This is it.' If I had some notes about it, it wasn't really relevant anymore.

"I'm glad to have some experience with the world of prosthetics, because now I understand a little more, once unleashed, what a force it is and how it takes over. It takes so long, and there are so many problems involving the health of the actors and their patience. I think that maybe we went a little far with this stuff, partly because I didn't know what I was getting into each time I accepted what seemed like a good idea. Each one of these

things is a nightmare."

Along with the prosthetics, designed by Greg Cannom and applied by Matthew Mungle, came a heavy dose of fake blood. "Yeah, it was fun to pump some blood again!" explained Lantieri. "You don't get a chance to do much of that these days. We did some pretty big blood effects; in fact, we had two water trucks full of it—600 gallons that we pumped in as fast as we could for one shot. With stakings and things like that, we definitely had blood flying and spurting.

"Greg Cannom's crew did a great appliance for us to shoot straight at Lucy when she vomits blood on Van Helsing—not one of those cheap side shots with a hose taped to the side of the face. There's a bit of nudity and a bit of gore, but that's the story. You can't do *DRACULA* and not have that—you'd be cheating the audience."

The "bit of gore" proved too much for test audiences, according to a brief story in the

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"We went a little far with [makeup] stuff," observed Coppola, "partly because I didn't know what I was getting into each time I accepted what seemed like a good idea."

COPPOLA'S DRACULA

THE VAMPIRE BRIDES

Few movie versions, until now, have portrayed the erotic, seductive temptresses that Bram Stoker envisioned.

*By Steve
Biodrowski*

Like many of Bram Stoker's supporting characters, the three vampire brides of Dracula, whom Jonathan Harker encounters in the Count's Transylvania castle, have a poor record of surviving cinematic adaptations. Neither version of *NOSFERATU* features them, nor do they appear in John Badham's 1979 version. *HORROR OF DRACULA* reduces their number to one, and Tod Browning portrayed them as ethereal wraiths rather than seductive temptresses.

Two productions entitled *COUNT DRACULA* (Jesse Franco's Spanish production with Christopher Lee and the BBC's *MASTERPIECE THEATRE* version with Louis Jourdan) are more faithful to the text, but lack the erotic spark. Francis Ford Coppola's version may be the first to capture the essence of these vivid characters, who play a small but memorable role in the proceedings.

Stoker has Harker describe the vampire women as "ladies by their dress and manner . . . Two were dark and had high, aquiline noses like the Count, and great, dark, piercing eyes that seemed to be almost red . . . The other was fair, as fair as can be, with great wavy masses of golden hair and eyes



"He is young and strong; there are kisses for us all," say Stoker's brides. But Coppola's vampires actually get their teeth into Harker (l to r): Florina Kendrick, Michaela Bercu and Monica Bellucci.

like pale sapphires." The fair-haired one, it is strongly implied, is the favored mistress of the Count, though this element is de-emphasized in the film in order to make way for Dracula's love affair with Mina. With this small exception, the brides re-emerge on screen as a faithful, though somewhat supercharged, adaptation of the author's original concept.

In an obvious approach, which inexplicably has never been taken before, Coppola cast authentically European women in the roles, rather than typical Hollywood starlets. In fact, all three were born overseas: Florina Kendrick in Rumania, Michaela Bercu in Israel, and Monica Bellucci. (Bellucci, who still resides in

Italy, returned home after completing her role, and was unavailable for an interview).

Kendrick, who had been a child actress on stage in Transylvania before coming to Los Angeles two years ago, heard about the role through her manager. "I decided I really wanted to try for it, because I felt I had so much to say on this subject," said Kendrick. "I met Francis Ford Coppola in October, right after the first week of shooting. While I was auditioning, the casting director told me that the production was looking for a Rumanian coach, in case I was interested. I said, 'Yes, why not? This is my language.' So, while I was still going through the tests for the part, I started coaching Gary Oldman, Anthony Hop-

kins and Winona Ryder.

"They wanted to see if we had the acting ability," said Kendrick of the testing, "not so much in words as in gestures—because vampires look human, but they have non-human qualities, so we had to express that feeling somehow. I think it was a very demanding part that had intensity and coldness, a human part and a very ethereal quality. They certainly spent time looking for the right actresses; they also wanted to have different looks."

Bercu was chosen to play the fair-haired vampire. "In my case,

they were looking for a blond girl, European and exotic," said the New York model of how she landed her first Hollywood role. "They were searching around LA, and later went to modeling agencies, including mine. Francis liked my picture. The next thing I knew, I was sent to Los Angeles to do a screen test with the casting director. Then, one night at nine o'clock, my agency called from LA and told me to be there at six o'clock the next morning to meet Mr. Coppola.

"I never did any acting before," said Bercu. "This was my first time, and for me it was a wonderful surprise. It was very exciting to work with a big director. Just to be on the set was a fascinating experience. I had been thinking about act-



Sadie Frost as Lucy Westenra, transformed into one of Dracula's vampire brides. Wrote Stoker, "The sweetness turned to adamantine, heartless cruelty, and purity to wantonness."



Having served his purpose, Harker is abandoned by Dracula to the whims of his vampire brides, fleeing on the castle steps.

ing, and had started to take some classes, but this came out of nowhere, like a present.”

Like Kendrick, Bercu had no problem with the language, since both her parents had come from Central Europe. “I’m half Rumanian and half Hungarian,” said Bercu. “That was the easy part for me, because I grew up speaking Rumanian at home. When they picked me, they did not know this. They said, ‘You’ll have a hard job—you’ll have to talk Rumanian.’ ‘Actually,’ I said, ‘Rumanian is easier for me than English!’ When I told my parents about speaking Rumanian, my father was very proud that I’d studied the language, because he’s my Ru-

manian side.”

Though the bride characters have limited screen time, the goal was to characterize them as much as possible. “I’m the dominatrix,” laughed Kendrick. “I’m the mature bride, the Medusa, the mythical character who turns you to stone. She has a very strong quality about her, yet of course she has to be a master of seduction. That’s what vampires are: the essence of seduction. They live on blood, and the only way they can get close to people is by seducing them, so they have to be attractive, beautiful creatures.

“The youngest bride, Michaela, is the favorite right now. Of course, there’s always

this fight: my character was the first, so I think I should still be the favorite. Each bride thinks she has more rights than the others. On the other hand, we are like one body. I like very much those opposites—it creates dramatic tension.”

In addition to dramatic tension, the brides’ hypnotically rapturous encounter with Harker also features some deceptive special effects, with the vampire women floating down from the ceiling on wires or rising up from the floor through trap doors. Noted Bercu, “I had to do a special effect where I bite a nipple; lots of blood comes out on my face, and I have to drink it. I had to climb on a wall after Dracula

throws me. For me, it was unbelievable. But, since I had never been on a movie set before, everything was like a special effect. The first day, when I went to meet Francis, I was walking with my mouth open—I could not believe the sets looked so real.”

Besides the fangs, pale faces and purple contact lenses common to all three brides, Kendrick also wore a very unusual hair style. “My hair took two hours every day—it looked like snakes,” she said of her Medusa appearance. “At one point, I had real snakes in my hair. Every time I think of that, I don’t know how I did it. I had about 15 Kingsnakes, different sizes and beautiful colors. I worked with them a couple of days in advance, so I could get comfortable with them—although I don’t know if you ever really get comfortable with snakes! When the scene came, they started loading these snakes in my curls, which were made to look like snakes. They let each snake wrap around so they wouldn’t fall off. They kept putting more until at one point I said, ‘No more—it’s loaded.’ When we started shooting, my head had a life of its own. I tried to be in tune with it. Honestly, I understand why they are symbols of sensuality. At the beginning, they might be frightening, but they are so smooth and gentle, and they move so slowly, that you cannot help but be captivated. I really believe that what terrifies us also captivates us. It’s the same with Dracula as with the snakes. I started liking them.”

Bercu summed up the experience of all three actresses, working on their first major motion picture: “For all of us, it was a great experience. We felt very lucky to be on the set with a director like Francis Ford Coppola and an actor like Keanu Reeves, who is great. We liked how the three brides were working together, but on the other hand, each one had her own personality. Francis looked at our personalities and tried to give each of us the part which we fit into. It was a wonderful experience—I never thought in my best dreams that something like this could happen to me.” □



“I’m sure the MPAA is going to give us the worst rating they have,” said Coppola. “Blood is a poetic metaphor in the movie, something they have a real aversion to.”

Los Angeles Times, which suggested that Coppola would be trimming the blood and also reinserting some information for story clarity. “That’s one of the things the preview is for,” said Coppola. “When you first shoot the stuff, you tend to say, ‘Well, let’s get it.’ Then if we have too much, we take a little out. The trick now is balancing the emotional story, which is most important.

“We wanted to deliver an exciting movie that would put you on the edge of your seat, yet we wanted to be emotional so you could really buy into the love story. We wanted it to be original, to show you things you’ve never seen before. We want it to be understandable so that you’re not lost as to where you are or what’s going on. As you know, Dracula is told through different journals, logs and diaries, so in the final phase of filmmaking, I’m really now just wrestling with the final articulation of the rules [of vampires]. It’s really

more in the area of comprehension, trying to get this Victorian novel straight.”

Coppola also expected confrontations with the MPAA, but doubts any necessary compromises will lessen the film’s effectiveness. “I’m sure the MPAA is going to give us the worst rating they have as far as scary stuff,” he admitted. “Blood is a poetic metaphor in the movie, but it is also something they have an aversion to, and the film is erotic. So sooner or later, when we show it to them, I’m sure that, however it’s done, we’ll come to peace, because you want to have nothing worse than an R. That’s what I’m obligated to give Columbia, so it’s a little bit out of my hands. And a little less is better than a little more. The movie is very strong in those areas, so I’m sure thinning it out a little is not going to hurt it. It’ll make it better.”

Hs of early July, Coppola was still a few weeks away from having his final cut ready in August for the remainder of post-production work, including music scoring. In the meantime, work continued on completing split-screen matte effects and shooting miniature establishing shots to help open up the look of the studio-bound production.

“Our Borgo Road, on Stage 15 at Columbia, was the size of a football field, but it had a low roof,” said Savitch. “So all of our wide, scope shots, which are supposed to show huge mountains, rolling hills and a castle beyond, were shot on a stage only 40-feet high. With matte paintings and our castle



Gary Oldman, in makeup by Matthew Mungle and Greg Cannom, as the old Dracula who greets Harker. Right: Oldman as the young Count in London.



miniature, we’ll manage to get a pretty good feeling of scope. The difficult thing is we have matte paintings of the castle, miniatures of the castle, and full-size sections of the castle; and they all have to integrate. That in itself is a major challenge.” The matte paintings are the work of Craig Barron and Michael Pangrazio of Matte World, in Marin County.

Supervising the post-production effects is Roman Coppola, whose second-unit handled most of the on-set effects work. “Our goal was to get as much as we could on stage,” he said. “We had a full second unit working in conjunction with first unit—we would go in and clean up shots that they didn’t have a chance to get. Of course, we did a large portion of effects during that period. Now, I’m still working on the film, super-

vising the matte painting and other elaborate opticals that we weren’t able to tackle totally on set.

“With the mattes, for example, I shot the plates on stage; now I’m supervising the painting. Even in those cases, with a few exceptions, we’re doing the effects in-camera, in the sense that Matte World came down and shot the plates with a black

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Mina (Winona Ryder) is forced by Dracula to drink blood from a vein in his chest.



COPPOLA'S DRACULA

FILMING LOW-TECH GOTHIC

Recreating Bram Stoker's supernatural, turn-of-the-century world took some old-fashioned movie magic.

By Steve Biodrowski

After the Oscar-winning T-1000 morphing techniques of *TERMINATOR 2*, one might think that the best way to remake *DRACULA* for the '90s would be to feature a dazzling array of computer-generated man-into-bat transformations. A visit to the set on the lot of Sony Studios in Culver City, California, revealed that such was not the case; rather, director Francis Ford Coppola has opted for an old-fashioned, in-camera approach, which the technicians have dubbed, much to the publicist's chagrin, "low-tech."

Filming had been closed to the press since the beginning of principal photography in September 1991. Fortunately, an invitation was extended after the first unit wrapped early this year. A walk through the soundstages revealed an impressive array of sets, many of them representing exterior scenes, such as the front gates of Castle Dracula. One soundstage the size of a football field was entirely devoted to the Borgo Pass, where Jonathan Harker meets Dracula's coach in the beginning and where Harker and his compatriots intercept the Count's coffin at the finale.

A smaller but equally impressive set featured the chapel in Dracula's castle, where the Count performs the blasphemy that will turn him into a vampire: after his wife, deceived into thinking him fallen in battle against the Turks, takes her own life, Dracula renounces



Francis Coppola, rehearsing a scene in the drawing room of the Westenra estate at Hillingham, one of the sumptuous Victorian sets designed by Dante Ferretti.

the Christian faith he was sworn to defend, driving a lance into a statue of Christ, which miraculously bleeds, covering the floor in a torrent of blood.

While these sets were in the process of being struck to make way for subsequent productions, second-unit M.O.S. (without sound) photography continued on a set representing the entrance to the Hillingham

Estate, home of the Count's first English victim, Lucy Westenra. The only full-size elements were a section of wall containing the front gate and some shrubbery. The mansion itself is actually a hanging miniature, suspended at the proper height to line up with a painting in the background, as if resting on a hill a mile away. It soon became obvious that the distinction between first and

second units was somewhat blurred; though only the second unit crew was present, intended to wrap up some miniature shots under the direction of Roman Coppola, father Francis Ford Coppola was taking the opportunity to improvise a brief scene between his two young leads, Winona Ryder and Gary Oldman.

The casting of Oldman in the title role has raised as many eyebrows as the dubious casting of Michael Keaton in *BATMAN*, but his performance in the scene being filmed provided some insight into the rationale behind Coppola's casting decision. As in Stoker's book, the vampire is portrayed as an old man who regains his youth by drinking blood; by the time he introduces himself to Mina (Ryder), he has achieved a dashing, youthful handsomeness designed to win her heart. Oldman's appearance is far removed from previous screen incarnations of the Count; his mustache and flowing hair cut a striking figure, somewhat reminiscent of Harvey Keitel in *THE DUELISTS*.

With the camera rolling, the elder Coppola guided his actors through a scene as if directing a silent movie. Dracula escorts Mina to the gate and bids farewell with a kiss on her hand; as he slowly departs, she stares after him, torn between her attraction to this mysterious stranger and her obligation to her fiancé.

While the crew moved the camera to film a reverse angle



“Basically, we wanted to go back to the origins of cinema trickery,” noted Roman Coppola. “We were very much inspired by the Expressionistic German silents.”

larger miniatures, over 10 feet tall, of Castle Dracula and Carfax Abbey. Their presence here is indicative of Coppola's method: all of the effects are to be filmed as part of principal photography, rather than completed in post-production by outside effects houses. This approach not only allows the director to maintain hands-on control over every frame of his film, it also meshes well with Coppola's overall vision of the project, which is studio-bound and highly stylized. With the single exception of a London street scene (filmed, appropriately enough, on the Universal Studios backlot), the entire film is being shot, interiors and exteriors, on stage, without

Winona Ryder as Mina Harker, who is also the reincarnation of Dracula's wife Elizabeth, a non-Stoker touch.



Filming the gypsy cart carrying Dracula's coffin back to his castle inside the cavernous Sony Studios. Wrote Stoker, "Well I knew that at sunset the Thing, which was imprisoned there, would take new freedom in many forms to elude pursuit."

of the same action, second-unit director Roman Coppola took a moment to explain why the actors are standing in front of a hanging miniature rather than a blue screen. "Basically, the attitude was we wanted to go back to the origins of cinema trickery," he said. "So many modern films rely on computer-generated effects and elaborate opticals; we consciously decided we wanted to use so-called 'primitive effects.' I did a lot of research in this area, kind of the crossover from theatrical magic to film magic. I turned up a couple of interesting things; the most interesting being that the time frame in which our film takes place, 1879, happens to be the birth of cinema. It turns out that movies were originally

promoted and explored by stage magicians. Melies is the famous name but there were others like Robert Paul. They applied a lot of their stage tricks to the cinema.

"We were very much inspired by the German Expressionist films," said Roman Coppola, "with their in-camera effects. For example, Pabst's *SECRET OF THE SOUL*, which had an elaborate dream sequence with multiple exposures, all done in-camera. When I first became involved in this film, I went back and scoured these old films for examples of different tricks and ideas that we used as inspirations. In fact, I compiled a notebook—photocopied pages of various books and still frames. We tried to film the movie all on stages where we

could control the elements, whereas if you're on location you can't control as much."

Visual effects coordinator Alison Savitch concurred with the Coppolas' approach. "I've done a lot of high-tech films for Amblin and Jim Cameron," she said. "This is quite the opposite, which is refreshing. It seems like everyone is trying to out-tech each other. What Francis is doing, instead, is taking an older approach, using effects they used before there were opticals. Roman really did his homework—he read every effects book in existence, and we did an enormous amount of research. For instance, Francis had never done a hanging miniature, but we realized that to build this huge house onstage was virtually impossible—there probably isn't a stage in existence that would hold it. So instead of the standard matte painting, we created a forced-perspective, five-foot miniature house, which is supposed to be a mile back on the road. With the right lenses and filters, you completely lose your depth of field, giving the impression of distance. With a miniature, you create that illusion of three-dimensional depth, which you don't quite get with a matte painting."

Tucked away in the corners of the soundstage are much

Another angle on the Carpathians, an exterior set built inside the soundstages of Sony Studios in Culver City, pursuing Dracula's coffin by horse and carriage.





Abandoned by Dracula to his brides, Jonathan Harker (Keanu Reeves) wanders the castle amidst the skeletons of Vlad the Impaler's former victims.

recourse to location work.

"Our hope is that the subtleties of the way we're doing things will integrate much more seamlessly," explained floor effects supervisor Michael Lantieri. "Usually, you're battling second unit and opticals, where you're trying to balance the lighting of things shot in different places. Francis wanted to have a direct hand and see what he was getting up front.

Renfield (Tom Waits), berserk in Dr. Seward's sanitarium. "I'll fight for my Lord and Master," wrote Stoker.



The fact that these are happening as your scene is happening—where your actors are, where your director is, and where your camera is—makes it all part of your moviemaking process. Our hope is it becomes part of the normal existence of the movie:

"We definitely want everyone to know we are in no way in competition with *TERMINATOR 2*—it's already been done. Francis' vision of this picture is it should be very much a sleight-of-hand magician's approach to special effects—which hopefully will be fresh again. We're trying to use the most modern technology in the oldest, low-tech way."

Satisfied with his coverage and his actors' performances, Coppola orders his crew to strike the camera set-up and move on to the next scene. While the grips and gaffers complied, the director took a moment to explain why he's directing a second-unit crew. "This setting was built for another scene. I thought, 'God, while we're here, I should do something where he takes her home and kisses her hand.' So we're really trying now to get what we can."

Coppola elaborated on his

decision to take a low-tech, in-studio, hands-on approach to filming *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*. "We're doing everything in-camera," he said. "There's not one blue-screen shot in the whole movie. First, I felt that in the total, this would result in a whole, integrated movie, whereas, if many effects were done by post-production personnel, it would put too much of the movie in other people's hands. Second of all, the methods they use are very technology-oriented. Since the film is set in the 19th century, I felt it would have more soul if we used cinematic techniques like those used in German films of the '20s, like *FAUST*. Murnau's *NOSFERATU* is one of

those films—not that it had many effects, but if you did all the effects in that tradition, it would give the film more of a non-technological style."

The wisdom of this approach should be apparent to anyone who endured Stephen King's *SLEEPWALKERS* earlier in the year. Computer-generated transformations have a distinctively glossy, high-tech look, much less appropriate to horror than science fiction. The old-fashioned cinematic legerdemain is far more in the spirit of Stoker's novel, in which supernatural phenomenon is most often half-witnessed in darkness and in distance, in the blink of an eye or in the periphery of vision. □

Inside the gates of Castle Dracula, built on Sony soundstages, Coppola chose to film the story entirely on sets to give the production a unique, stylized look.





“It’s unlike any Dracula film I know of, and I’ve seen a lot,” said Coppola. “Its fresh approach to the book is an advantage. People are bound to be tired of cliches.”

hold-out, and when they complete the painting they’ll re-expose the same negative.

“Aside from the matte paintings, we did a couple of other shots that way, in which I would shoot our actor, then can the film and bring it to another effects place, which added a miniature train. Doing the in-camera stuff is scary, because you never know what you’re going to get, but shooting the entire film on stage will definitely give a stylized look. There are practical problems: you rarely get the camera as low as you want, because you’d be shooting into the rafters; also, wider angle lenses, because they see so much, often reveal the edge of the set. But the control that we had—being able to make snow and do lighting changes—was a real bonus. It’s unlike any other Dracula film that I know of, and I’ve seen a lot of them. It’s definitely a fresh approach to the book. I think there’s an advantage—people are bound to be tired of the cliches.”

Summing up his approach to remaking Stoker’s oft-filmed novel, director Francis Ford Coppola said, “The first question when we started making this was, ‘Oh, why do you want to make another Dracula?’ But when the film comes out, I don’t think it’s going to be criticized for being the same old thing. I’m sure they’ll find *something* to criticize, but it won’t be that. I think it’s an original production of the novel by a film director who tried to do it a little bit from his gut.” □



Harker approaches the entrance to Dracula’s castle. Wrote Stoker, “Of bell or knocker there was no sign; through these vast frowning walls and dark window openings it was not likely that my voice could penetrate. What sort of place had I come to?”

INTRUDERS

Robert Short on fabricating the TV extraterrestrials.

By Chuck Crisafulli

The alien puppets seen in the *INTRUDERS*, a Dan Curtis-directed CBS miniseries telecast last May, were the work of Bob Short, an Oscar winner for his work in *BEETLEJUICE*. Short was brought onto the *INTRUDERS* production team by visual effects supervisor Mitch Suskin to create a crew of worker, drone aliens, a commanding "doctor" alien and human/alien hybrids, seen at several different stages of development, from fetus to full grown.

Having worked on both *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS* and *E.T.*, Short was no stranger to alien designs, but he felt he could work towards a more accurate interpretation of what alleged UFO abductees have described in their stories. Short said he learned a valuable lesson from watching *COMMUNION*, a film that dealt with the same kind of visitation stories. "What that film showed me is that if you interpret this stuff too literally—according to drawings and descriptions of abductees—there's something inherently wrong. Since most of the abductee information is sketchy, if you use that information verbatim you get a sketchy character that isn't convincing. The creatures become lifeless." The key to Short's approach was to use enough of the literal descriptions to be true to the material, without losing an edge of mystery

and fantasy.

While the presence, or absence, of space creatures in our skies is the stuff of abstract arguments, for the artist who has to build the creatures, it becomes a question of elbows. "One of the things that shows up in the descriptions of the doctor aliens is that they have no joints," said Short. "Their arms are like spaghetti strands and move like octopus tentacles. There's no bone structure. That's the way they're described, but if you do that, the alien can end up looking like Gumby. You don't buy it as a living creature. In the back of your head you think, 'It has fingers, so it should have an elbow.' We finally found some drawings where the aliens did have elbows, so we decided we could mix elements from different interpretations in order to build something that would be believable."

Alien eyes were also troublesome. Many of the abductees describe their captors' eyes as being like deep, black, bottomless starfields. But others say the eyes are an unreadable, opaque ebony. Because Short wanted his puppets to be as effective in closeups as they would be in long shots, the eyes were crucial. "All the accounts said 'black eyes,' but black wouldn't read well in film," said Short. "We ended up using a royal blue with a pearl-essence in it, under an inch-thick, clear resin cornea.

Other Short designs: an alien drone (left), Mare Winningham with an alien offspring (c) and a nurse/alien (r).



An alien doctor, a fully articulated body puppet created by Robert Short Productions for *INTRUDERS*, operated with both cable-activated and radio controls.

From the side, the cornea would catch the light, and when you saw them straight on you'd see darkness, with highlights from the lighting, and some blue specks, and bits of red from veining we gave them. They had real depth. To some extent we ignored the literal descriptions to get the described effect."

Abductee descriptions generally indicate that the aliens are blank-faced and emotionless, but Short felt it would be a serious mistake not to give them some facial animation. Through the use of cable controls, air bladders and radio units, the puppets were capable of the subtlest of expressions, from an angry pursing of the lips to a quizzical frowning of the brow. "We over-extended the facial expressions beyond what was called for in order to have some range," said Short. "Our aliens were ready for all kinds of emotional close-ups, but most of that didn't get used. There's a tendency to downplay the ability of puppets to evoke emotion. It does take a little more time and work to get the right nuance and get the right shots to establish puppet emotions, so it's usually easier to just cut to an actor. I'm happy with the show, but I know our stuff could have made a bigger impression."

The general attitude of the intruding aliens shifted considerably during the month that Short had to develop his creatures. In the original script, the aliens were much more menacing than they ended up being in the final shooting script, and Short's original designs reflected this by being a lot more "dangerous looking." Director Dan Curtis insisted Short rework the designs to achieve a "benign, amorphic, friendly" look. Like *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS*, Short noted that Curtis opted for the use of kids for walking shots. □

REVIEWS

A personality switch scenario with genuine spiritual magic

PRELUDE TO A KISS

A 20th Century Fox release of a Michael Gruskoff/Michael I. Levy production. 7/92, 106 mins. In Dolby & color. Director, Norman Rene. Executive producer, Jennifer Ogden. Co-producers, Craig Lucas & Norman Rene. Associate producer, Deborah Schindler. Director of photography, Stefan Czapsky. Editor, Stephen A. Rotter. Production designer, Andrew Jackness. Set design, Karen Fletcher. Costume designer, Walker Kicklin. Music, Howard Shore. Screenplay by Craig Lucas, based on his play.

Peter Hoskins	Alec Baldwin
Rita Boyle	Meg Ryan
Leah Blier	Kathy Bates
Dr. Boyle	Ned Beatty
Mrs. Boyle	Patty Duke
Old Man	Sydney Walker
Jerry Blier	Richard Riehle
Taylor	Stanley Tucci

by Thomas Doherty

Soul-switching movies are a natural for the movies, which themselves cater to the transmigration of soul from spectator to star. The cultural resonance of the popular swathe of supernatural possession, personality transfer, and redesigned body films that kicked off in the mid-'80s—a trope wide enough to encompass everything from the Steve Martin/Lily Tomlin comedy *ALL OF ME* to the cold prosthetics of *ROBOCOP*—must have something to do with aging baby boomers facing the prospect of widening waistlines and sagging erogenous zones, folks who suddenly have good reason to be dissatisfied with their chronological age or body type. *18 AGAIN!*, *VICE VERSA*, *BIG* and *SWITCH*—demographically speaking, the spirit is restless.

Perhaps because the switcheroo angle has become so hackneyed, the obscure advance publicity for *PRELUDE TO A KISS* gave no clue to its central conceit. On its face, the plot outline sounds creaky and conventional: two discontented spirits exchange corporeal forms and learn, by gosh, that life isn't a bed of roses in the other fella's shoes, or high heels, as the case may be. Yet director Rene Norman's film of Craig Lucas' stage play avoids the easy moralism and derivative fish-out-of-flesh shtick that animates others in the genre. A charming romantic fable that you'll either go with or walk away from, *PRELUDE TO A KISS* pulls its own big switch.

When mild-mannered bespectacled Peter Hoskins (Alec Baldwin) spies luscious bartender Rita Boyle (Meg Ryan), frugging away to Roxy Music, sparks leap across the room and the couple mind



Hubby Alec Baldwin looks on as Meg Ryan and Sydney Walker make their switching kiss, at last an entry in the popular soul-switching genre with real substance.

melds before the Dyvinals finish the next number. The chemical click between the two leads is easy, unforced and essential for the film's atmosphere of woozy unbalance. (For a comparison, check out the total lack of screen magnetism between Baldwin and real-life squeeze Kim Basinger in *THE MARRYING MAN*). There is no basic instinct attraction, but a merging of kindred spirits.

For an epic romance, however, Rita and Peter are as wide awake as starry-eyed. The small talk between the couple is about big stuff—Peter's awful, Dickensian childhood; *The White Hotel*, the D.M. Thomas novel of the birth of psychotherapy and the horror of the Holocaust; and such ice breakers as time, apocalypse and death. It turns out that the exuberant Rita is a world-class insomniac tormented by visions of global conflagration and beset by a gnawing fear of life.

After a whirlwind six-week courtship, Peter proposes marriage. At the ceremony, a strange old man (Sydney Walker) wanders into the reception and kisses the bride. Ominous clouds cover the sky, the wind comes up, and, well, we've all seen *BIG*. The honeymoon trip to Jamaica proves a romantic disaster. Surprisingly little slapstick is squeezed from the cross-generational, cross-gender incongruity that is the bread and butter of this switcheroo subgenre. Absolutely nothing

is done with what Blake Edwards made a whole movie out of in *SWITCH*—the operations of sex change. The implication is that the couple is still sleeping together, but no scene acts out the orgasmic miscues. Spiritual, not corporeal, intercourse remains the point.

The original hook here is that it is Peter, not the two swapmates, who must make the mental adjustment and spiritual leap of faith. His first-person voice-over controls the narrative point of view and grants access to his emotional interior. The slow and painful realization that this woman is not his woman, and his response to the disappearance of his beloved, is the film's dramatic center. Spying the old man from his wedding, Peter is quick to recognize Rita's inner light.

By the way, Sydney Walker, the elderly actor who plays the transformed Rita, really comes off like a slow-moving old man at the end of his road—not at all like the usual movie version of the aged as fast-talking, sprightly old-timers. Ryan and Walker don't seem to have devoted much attention to playing off the other's gestures (unlike the underrated *VICE VERSA* where Fred Savage and Judge Reinhold worked out visual body language to evoke the new identities in different suits).

Like so much fantastical cinema these days, the AIDS subtext is just below the level of consciousness in *PRELUDE TO A KISS*.

Not coincidentally, Norman Rene's previous film was *LONGTIME COMPANION*, the melodrama depicting the impact of AIDS on a cross-section of homosexual comrades in New York City. The transformation of human beauty into terminal decrepitude is evoked in the film's central metaphor: teeth. Ryan's gleaming California orthodontics and the old man's yellowed and rotting choppers provide a joking tag line for the lesson of life (advice to Rita—floss).

Peter must not only recognize the beautiful woman he married inside the repulsive old codger but love her/him. He passes the first part of the test when he walks home to find that the old Rita is apparently back—only to kiss her and realize otherwise. "I'm on to you" he tells her, eyes brimming with tears. In this sense the title is misdirection: Rene and screenwriter Lucas are interested in what comes *after* the kiss.

The theatrical roots of the screenplay help the suspension of disbelief. The world of *PRELUDE TO A KISS* is self-contained and ethereal—a small cast of characters and lots of breathless close-ups. Save for the one bow to supernatural narrative necessity, the film is totally realistic. Another departure from normal switcheroo convention is that the reason for the transformation is held back until the final reel—no sacred amulet, mutual magic words, or divine intervention. Each simply wishes for the other's path at the moment of the kiss—she, that her life was securely finished; he, that he could start it all over again.

Of course, the restoration of the old love and the relinquishment of the old guy is the necessary closure. Without the trade back, the injustice of the exchange—a frame racked by lung cancer and cirrhosis for Ryan's ripe bod—would turn a romance into a tragedy. But the putting of the bodies right is a loose end. In recognizing and accepting a physically transformed Rita, Peter has already completed his rite of passage. *PRELUDE TO A KISS* ain't perfect—there's too little of Ryan and she's not persuasive as a fearful waif—but in a line-up of sleight-of-hand tricksters, it's spiritual magic is the real thing. □

Dominique Pinon on Clowning in DELICATESSEN

By Dan Persons

You may be excused if you didn't know they made films like DELICATESSEN in France. It seems the only films emerging recently from the land of Truffaut and Godard have been studies in mannered classicism like JEAN DE FLORETTE, MY FATHER'S GLORY and CYRANO DE BERGERAC. According to actor Dominique Pinon, star of the stylish, black comedy, "This might be a typical film for [directors Jean-Pierre] Jeunet and [Marc] Caro, but in France it was seen as a very bizarre thing. The whole crew, the actors, we knew we were going to do something very special, and we were motivated."

No motivation, though, could match that of Jeunet and Caro, two experimental film- and video-makers who have been working together since the early '80s (and have netted a Cesar Award—the French Oscar—for their short film, LE MENAGE). While spending a decade creating shorts, animated films and commercials, the two labored to devise a feature project with a budget modest enough to merit an investor's gamble, and intriguing enough to hold the directors' attention. With the help of comic book author and screenwriter Giles Adrien, they came up with the notion of a post-Holocaust tenement presided over by a butcher with a radical, new technique for keeping his shop in stock: peddle human flesh instead of animal.

After five years of shopping the script around, Jeunet and Caro finally received the funding to begin shooting in the summer of 1990. Both interiors and exteriors were shot in-studio, in a facility located in the Parisian suburb of Potin. On-location shooting was restricted to the Paris reservoirs, which doubled as the hideout of the underground terrorists, the Troglodistes. For the production, Jeunet and Caro assembled a crew suited to their own head-sets: mostly young (Pinon estimated the age range between 25 and 30), mostly first-timers.

Pinon originally read for the part of Mr. Tapioca, a tenant with a modestly extended family and a vital, and very specific need for whatever

entrails the butcher can supply (actor Ticky Holgado was later cast in the role). Pinon eventually landed himself the lead role of Louison, the former clown who becomes the butcher's newest handyman and the building's next prospective Daily Special. This, to say the least, was a change for a stage and screen actor who—both here and in his native country—had previously been known for his role as the punk murderer in the film DIVA.

"I was very happy to be offered the part in DELICATESSEN," Pinon said, "because after DIVA I was typecast. They thought I was only able to play one kind of character, and I thought I wouldn't have the opportunity to do other things. Only Jean-Pierre Jeunet had the idea of me playing a totally opposite kind of character. For me, it was a pleasure.

"I had to make some tests, and when they were sure I was going to play the part, they rewrote it. Originally, the part of Louison was less elaborate than the others. He didn't have a past. They got the idea of making Louison an ex-clown quite late.

"Louison is a kind of . . . how do you say it in English, a charming prince? Prince Charming? Yes, like in the fairy tale—to me, DELICATESSEN is also a fairy tale, with a princess and an ogre."

One of the more unusual aspects of the production was the breakdown of responsibilities for the two collaborators: Jeunet taking on most of the directing chores, Caro seeing after the production design and the film's general look and sound. Explained Pinon, "We actors worked mostly with Jean-Pierre Jeunet—we did a lot of rehearsals with him. Caro is



The Troglodistes, vegetarian subterranean terrorists, capture Karin Viard, an above-grounder who buys meat at the DELICATESSEN and doesn't ask questions.

mostly an art director, but they worked together and it was not a problem.

"Jeunet was a bit afraid before the shooting, because he hadn't worked with actors before. That's why we had rehearsals—it was for us, but it was also for him to be more at ease. And after the first days of shooting, he realized he loved it, loved directing actors."

Storyboards were prepared and strictly adhered to by the directors. "They both knew what they wanted," said Pinon. "There was no improvisation. [Jeunet] wouldn't come in one day not knowing where he would set the camera. The storyboards were very elaborate—we could improvise things inside the scene, but only within a very precise scheme. For example, the ballet we do on the bed, when I come and visit Mrs. Plusse. We rehearsed that in the morning, found some things to do, and shot it in the afternoon. The idea of doing it was from Jeunet, but we did it our way."

For other sequences in the film,

Caro and Jeunet called in professional clowns to teach Pinon the complex arts of bubble blowing and three-legged dancing. A retired clown couple—Les Sipolos, specialists in eccentric musical instruments—were recruited to give the actor a crash-course on the musical saw. This, by Pinon's standards, was nothing compared to what his romantic co-star, Marie-Laure Dougnac, had to learn. "She was playing cello, and she didn't play cello at all, so she had to do a lot of work. Anyone can play the musical saw after just a few hours. Playing cello is another challenge."

Pinon's other co-star, actor Jean-Claude Dreyfus—who plays DELICATESSEN's monstrous butcher—has appeared previously in such films as Rainer Werner Fassbinder's L'OMBRE DES ANGES and Werner Herzog's FITZCARRALDO. In France, though, he is best known for his stage work. "He's a very nice person," said Pinon. "He's not mean at all. What was funny was that, while we were working on the film, we were both working on-stage at night, at the same theatre, but not on the same stage. There were times when we were both [on-set and] very nervous after six o'clock at night, because we had to play after. We had to leave the set fast. It was sometimes exhausting."

Beyond the anxieties involved with the race to make an evening curtain, Pinon could recall no difficulties connected with the shooting, not even in the elaborate effects finale that, at one point, found him and Dougnac immersed in a water-filled set

Love conquers hunger: Laure-Dougnac and Pinon play a rooftop duet for cello and saw, the fadeout of an amazing French comedy by Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro.



A post-apocalypse filmed with charm and wit

DELICATESSEN

A UGC release of a Constellation-UGC-Hachette Premiere production. 5/91, 96 mins. In color. Directors, Jean-Pierre Jeunet & Marc Caro. Producer, Claudie Ossard. Director of photography, Darius Khondji. Editor, Herve Schneid. Production designer, Jean-Philippe Carp. Music, Carlos D'Alessio. Screenplay by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Marc Caro & Gilles Adrien.

Louison	Dominique Pinon
Julie	Marie-Laure Dougnac
Butcher	Jean-Claude Dreyfus
Robert	Rufus
Husband	Ticky Holgado
Wife	Anne-Marie Pisani

by Dan Persons

Hunger is everything. In an isolated corner of a post-apocalyptic France, an ambitious butcher (Jean-Claude Dreyfus) murders his building's custodians and dispenses the remains in neat, little portions to his tenants. Next on the menu: Louison (Dominique Pinon), a former circus star with a suitcase full of memories and a soon-to-be fatal faith in the goodness of humanity. Problem: the butcher's near-sighted daughter, Julie (Marie-Laure Dougnac), has fallen ass-over-teakettle (literally) for the newcomer. All she has standing in the way of true happiness is her father, his cleaver, and a building full of people who frequently have trouble seeing past their dinner plates.

Terry Gilliam "presents" this very French take on post-holocaust survival—that's what the posters say. It's obvious that the Monty Python alumnus had nothing to do with making the film, but it isn't hard to see why he'd be willing to lend his name to the project. There are distinct parallels between what directors Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro have done with their devolving city and what we've seen in the future-retro societies of such films as Gilliam's **BRAZIL**. The wrecked tenement—the last building left on (get this) Wiggler's Avenue—stands as remote and mist-bound as the most atmospheric of Gilliam's medieval castles. Within, it is the Dark Ages revisited, with nighttime hallways becoming virtual Norman's-zones, tenants desperately barricading themselves into their apartments, and the butcher presiding as lord over all, regaling those who would dare consider leaving his little fiefdom with tales of the anarchy and violence that exist without. As isolated as a hermitage, the building's activities begin to take on an odd, self-reflexive flavor. Two brothers spend



Marie-Laure Dougnac and Dominique Pinon in the water-soaked effects finale of Jeunet and Caro's **DELICATESSEN**, a funny French oddity.

their days building little cylinders that moo when upended, though the market for such playthings would seem virtually nil. One senior, in a supremely Gilliamesque bit of self-destruction, sits and knits for ceaseless hours while a motorized spool unravels the cloth from the other end.

Where **DELICATESSEN** departs from the Gilliam mold is in its subtle shift in tone. For all the evil, violence and death that is dispensed within the film's 96 minutes, this is an uncommonly sweet-natured tale. Credit, in large degree, must go to Dominique Pinon for his performance as the over-optimistic handyman, Louison. If the actor's known at all in the U.S., it's for his virtually speechless turn as the accordion-loving killer punk in Jean-Jacques Beineix's **DIVA**. Here, decked out in meticulously polished clown shoes and granted a strange, haunted past, he turns into a 21st-century Chaplin—all self-effacement and awkward grace (his face, admittedly, helps—high-browed and elastic, it could be handsome if the proportions weren't so skewed. Not surprisingly, it takes to clown makeup with a natural ease). His gentle dignity is well matched by Marie-Laure Dougnac, who plays Julie less as a sheltered inno-

cent than as a woman awakening to her responsibilities in a world where morality no longer exists. (Is it only an accident that the character with the worst eyesight is also the most visionary?)

DELICATESSEN echoes the episodic structure of silent comedies. The film is largely composed of set-pieces—all good, some downright inspired. A scene where the daily activities of the building sync into the squeaking bedsprings of the butcher and his mistress is a wonder of cross-cutting and cunningly placed camera. The scene's corollary—in which Louison and the mistress endeavor to find the telltale mattress spring and end up performing a choreographed dance set to the music of a nearby TV—is a subtle reworking, effectively delineating the differences between the brutish, overbearing butcher (who, as played by Dreyfus, is rather bovine) and the clown.

In the end, though, Messrs. Jeunet and Caro come very close to being betrayed by their structure. There's a touch too much being crammed into **DELICATESSEN**, and Jeunet and Caro have trouble detecting when to stop. Near the end of the film, they bring things to a mammoth climax, and then go on, dragging in as many of the neighbors as can be crammed into one apartment, adding an impressive special effects finale that must have drained all the reservoirs in France, and over-running everything with an armed, vegetarian and totally ineffective underground army known as the Troglodistes. Within its last few minutes, the film loses its way, and what should have finished on the victory of the two lovers, instead has to settle for a less satisfying defeat of their antagonists.

But if the film is flawed, much better it should err as it does—on the side of excess. What we have here is an embarrassment of riches. Though the cold war may be at an end, this quirky tale of a nuclear winter somehow seems more pertinent than ever. Wayward as **DELICATESSEN**'s plotline is, one can easily excuse Jeunet and Caro their tendency to go overboard. With imagery as rich and moving as this, how can one resist being swept along? □

for several days. His summation of that experience: "It's funny, I wouldn't say it was hard." What was hard, in the actor's view, was the sequence that followed: a closing shot in which the camera sweeps the roof of the tenement several times, eventually revealing Pinon and Dougnac—instruments in hand and immersed in a duet—magically materialized in a spot that had been empty just seconds before.

"It was a very long shot and difficult because the camera was moving. We had to do it a lot of times. We had to run on the roof and sit down very fast, and when the camera was moving back towards us, we were supposed to be very calm, and playing. [It required] a lot of people, some in charge of the chairs, others in charge of the instruments. It was hard to get the timing right."

The entire shoot was completed in 16 weeks. "Which," noted Pinon, "is quite a lot, compared to the majority of films produced in France." After the wrapping of principal photography, two more weeks were devoted to the miniature work needed to recreate the exterior of the ravaged tenement and its surrounding streets. **DELICATESSEN** premiered in 1991, and was well received in France. For its U.S. run, distributor Miramax decided to stick with the original, European cut—despite the company's reputation for re-editing foreign titles before distribution (said Pinon of the likelihood the film had been cut for American audiences. "Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Caro wouldn't allow it.")—and has been rewarded with near-unanimous critical praise.

Despite the accolades, Pinon believes the film's creators had a few minor misgivings about the finished product. "I think that Jean-Pierre and Marc were not very happy with the Troglodiste part," said Pinon. "I don't agree with them, but they thought it was a bit too long. But, you know, it's a first film. One can make mistakes. I'm proud of the film. I'm proud to be part of it."

Jeunet and Caro are already planning their next project, a film that the **DELICATESSEN** press notes describe as "Pinocchio meets Fritz Lang." Pinon expressed hope that Jeunet and Caro would find a place for him in their upcoming project, noting the difficulty French actors have in finding films of **DELICATESSEN**'s calibre. "It's exciting to do," said Pinon. "In the United States there are a lot of action films. In France, we can never do that." □

FILM RATINGS

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

Directed by Fran Rubel Kuzui. Fox, 8/92, 100 mins. With: Kristy Swanson, Luke Perry, Donald Sutherland, Rutger Hauer, Paul Rubens.

As high concepts go, the idea of a spoiled, self-centered Valley princess discovering she is the reincarnation of a centuries-old killer of blood-suckers isn't a bad one. Unfortunately, screenwriter Joss Whedon doesn't bother to draw the obvious parallels between the sometimes cruel machinations of high-school politics and the grim ruthlessness of the truly dedicated vampire fighter, while director Fran Rubel Kuzui short-changes her mythology, botches her action scenes and commits the greatest sin of all by making vampires look boring. The adult actors (including Buffy's mentor Donald Sutherland and lead vampires Rutger Hauer and Paul Rubens) behave like they showed up for their paychecks and little else. The teen leads—Kristy Swanson as vamp-killer Buffy and Luke Perry as her greaser squeeze—will likely grow out of this. I say, let's lock 'em all in with a copy of NEAR DARK and not let them out 'til they swear they've learned their lesson.

o Dan Persons

COOL WORLD

Directed by Ralph Bakshi. Paramount, 7/92, 102 mins. With: Kim Basinger, Gabriel Byrne, Brad Pitt, Michele Abrams.

Despite the allure of Kim Basinger in both of her cartoon forms, this is an unhip and unanimated exercise in inter-media intercourse. The memory of WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT flattens this exercise—not just because of its superior animation and wit, but because it had a narrative frame as well as a visual hook. Director Ralph Bakshi's live-action cartoon mixture isn't about anything but the exploitation of new trans-media technology—motivations are obscure, plot holes abound, continuity is erratic and the metaphysical rules seem to be made up as the film goes along.

Keeping the corporeal Basinger under wraps for roughly half the film is a nice tease, but Holly's transformation into buoyant pulchritude is not the thrilling metamorphosis it should be. Stumbling through the streets of Las Vegas in a skin-tight dress and killer heels, Basinger never connects with her character—dare one say it is underdrawn?—or with boyfriend/creator Gabriel Byrne, who seems mainly to be

	●●●●	●●●	●●	●	○		
	MUST SEE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	MEDIOCRE	POOR		
FILM TITLE	DG	JPH	AJ	BK	GK	DS	DSC
ALIEN 3/David Fincher Fox, 5/92, 115 mins.	●	●	●●	●	●●		●●●
AFRAID OF THE DARK/Mark Peploe Fine Line Features, 7/92, 91 mins.		●	○	●		●	●●
BATMAN RETURNS/ Tim Burton, Warner Bros, 6/92, 126 mins.	●●●	●	●	●	●●●	●●	●●●
BRAIN DEAD/Peter Jackson Wingnut Films, 7/92, 101 mins.	○		●●●●	●			●●●
BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER/ Fran Rubel Kuzui, Fox, 7/92, 86 mins.	●	●		○	●	●	○
CAPTAIN AMERICA/Albert Pyun Columbia TriStar, 6/92, 97 mins.			○	○		●●	○
COOL WORLD/Ralph Bakshi Paramount, 7/92, 102 mins.	○			○	●	●●	●
DEATH BECOMES HER/Robert Zemeckis Universal, 7/92, 103 mins.	●●	●	●	●	●●	●●●	●●●
DOLLY DEAREST/Maria Lease Trimark video, 6/92, 93 mins.		●●				●●	
ENCINO MAN/Les Mayfield Buena Vista, 5/92, 98 mins.	○			○			●●
FERN GULLY/Animation Fox, 6/92, 76 mins.	●●		○	○	●●●		●●●
HAUNTING FEAR/Fred Olen Ray Cinemax cable TV, 7/92, 88 mins.		○		○		●	
HONEY, I BLEW UP THE KID/Randal Kleiser Buena Vista, 7/92, 89 mins.	●	●●		●	●	●●	●●
MOM AND DAD SAVE THE WORLD/ Greg Beeman, Warner Bros, 7/92, 88 mins.	●	●		○			●●
PINOCCHIO/Walt Disney Buena Vista (1940 re-issue), 7/92, 87 mins.	●●●		○	●●●●	●●●	●●●●	●●●●
PRELUDE TO A KISS/Norman Rene Fox, 7/92, 106 mins.	●			●●●	●●	●	●
RAISING CAIN/Brian DePalma Universal, 8/92, 95 mins.	○	●	●●	○	●	●	○
THE REN AND STIMPY SHOW/ Animation, Nickelodeon TV series, 30 mins.	●	○		●●			●
SINGLE WHITE FEMALE/Barbet Schroeder Columbia, 8/92, 107 mins.	●●		●	●●●	●●	●●	○
STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION/ Paramount, syndicated TV series, 60 mins.	●	●●●		●●	●●		●●
STAY TUNED/Peter Hyams Warner Bros, 8/92, 90 mins.				●	●●		●
TALES FROM THE CRYPT/ HBO-TV series, 6/92, 90 mins.		●		●		●●	
UNIVERSAL SOLDIER/Roland Emmerich TriStar, 7/92, 104 mins.	○		●	●	●	●●	●●
UNLAWFUL ENTRY/Jonathan Kaplan Fox, 7/92, 111 mins.	●		○	●			●●
WAXWORK II/Anthony Hickox Live Home Video, 7/92, 104 mins.	○	○	●	○		●●	●
WHISPERS IN THE DARK/ Christopher Crowe, Paramount, 7/92, 102 mins.	●			●	●	●●	●●

DG/Dann Gire JPH/Judith P. Harris AJ/Alan Jones BK/Bill Kelley
GK/Gary Kimber DS/Dan Scapperotti DSC/Dan Schweiger

hanging on for dear life. Bakshi (WIZARDS, LORD OF THE RINGS) deserves credit for flying high the flag of feature length animation during the '70s doldrums, but the limits in his budgets and imagination make for great trailers and disappointing movies. Ironically and instructively, another story of a cartoon creation wanting to be a real human gives stiff competition to Bakshi's voluptuous sexbomb—Walt Disney's PINOCCHIO, currently in its generational re-

release. For sheer animated invention and narrative thrust, Disney World beats Bakshi's world hands down.

o Thomas Doherty

DEATH BECOMES HER

Directed by Robert Zemeckis. Universal, 7/23, 103 mins. With: Meryl Streep, Bruce Willis, Goldie Hawn, Isabella Rossellini.

The early work of Robert Zemeckis, from USED CARS all the way back to his USC student short A FIELD OF HONOR, displayed a darkly satiric sensibility and a frenetic

style that was submerged in his effort to garner mainstream success with ROMANCING THE STONE and BACK TO THE FUTURE. Glimpses of that style and sensibility may have briefly resurfaced in WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT and BACK TO THE FUTURE II. Here they emerge in full force, creating just about the blackest comedy imaginable from a major studio.

The script by Martin Donovan and David Koeff (APARTMENT ZERO, BAD INFLU-

ENCE) provides only the slimmest of plots, essentially an extended catfight between Madeline Ashton (Meryl Streep) and Helen Sharp (Goldie Hawn) over the affection of Bruce Willis' Beverly Hills plastic surgeon. But once the magic potion provided by Lisle Von Rhuman (Isabella Rossellini) has rendered the characters as invulnerable as the inhabitants of Toon Town, all hell breaks loose. Streep takes the worst fall down a flight of stairs since Jason Miller in THE EXORCIST and ends up with a neck job of which Linda Blair would be proud—and that's just for starters.

Zemeckis orchestrates all the mayhem into a savage attack against the kind of vain mind-set that would pay any price to preserve a youthful appearance. Along the way, he also cops a scene from Dan O'Bannon's RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD, when a horrified doctor informs Streep's character, after checking pulse and respiration, that she is dead. And fans of THE CONQUEROR WORM will be pleased to see Ian Ogilvy in an amusing cameo, sounding rather like Roger Moore doing Peter Sellers as Inspector Clouseau. ●●● Steve Biodrowski

DISASTER IN TIME

Directed by David N. Tsohy. Showtime (cable TV), 5/92, 98 mins. With: Jeff Daniels, Ariana Richards, Emilia Crow.

This made-for-TV movie is based on a science fiction story co-written by C.L. Moore, which makes it more thoughtful and intelligent than most of what's seen on TV or in films. It postulates a future society so jaded by the perfection of their lives that citizens travel through time to sites of great disasters, such as the San Francisco earthquake, just to observe the "spectacle."

When they come to a small rural community, the hotel owner (Jeff Daniels) somehow figures all this out, but is unable to prevent the death of his young daughter. However, he manages to get hold of a time travel device and figures out how to get himself back to a time just before the disaster that wiped out most of his town. Now there are two of him running around, which allows for the kind of seamless traveling mattes that characterized Jeremy Iron's twin roles in DEAD RINGERS.

The cast is full of no-name actors, but includes two familiar faces, George Murdock and



Pitt and Holli Would in Bakshi's **COOL WORLD**: underdrawn.

Robert Colbert, whose TV career dates back to **MAVERICK** (1961) and who, appropriately, was once the lead regular on **TIME TUNNEL** (1966). The title is, apparently, a last minute change from **THE GRAND TOUR**, and the word "grand" is bandied about quite a bit in the dialogue, without much resonance as a result.

•• Judith P. Harris

HONEY, I BLEW UP THE KID

Directed by Randal Kleiser. Buena Vista. 7/92, 89 mins. With: Rick Moranis, Marcia Strassman, Robert Oliveri, Daniel Shalikar, Joshua Shalikar.

This repeat of the successful **HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS** formula is actually superior. The sequel smooths out the structure by not having the action take place in two separate frames of reference. Once baby Adam is blown up to giant size, the chase is on to track him down, and the sight gags never stop.

Unfortunately, the folks at Disney still cannot help but throw in everything possible in the hopes of appealing to as wide an audience as possible. As a sop to the teen audience, Wayne's son lusts after Adam's bimbo babysitter, who at one point inexplicably endangers her life—a cheap plot device so that the nerd can save her and win her love. And, as if a giant baby weren't enough of a problem to hold our attention, an extraneous villain lurks around the edges of the story, first trying to take over Wayne's experiments and later shooting at the baby with elephant tranquilizer.

•• Steve Biodrowski

MOM AND DAD SAVE THE WORLD

Directed by Greg Beeman. Warner Bros. 7/92, 87 mins. With: Teri Garr, Jeffrey Jones, Jon Lovitz, Thalmus Rasulala.

Dull, crass and stupefyingly unfunny, this dim-witted bottom-of-the-barrel sci-fi spoof is representative of the absolute worst Hollywood has to offer. Working from a flaccid

script by Chris Matheson and Ed Solomon (**BILL & TED I & II**), director Greg Beeman misses the comic mark at every turn despite the usually capable comic talents of Jeffrey Jones and Teri Garr, both of whom seem lost and uninterested throughout. Worse still is the improvisationally crazed performance of lead Jon Lovitz playing the nefarious Tod Spengo, an egomaniacal ruler of a planet populated by idiots who kidnaps Garr while vacationing with her cranky hubby (Jones) on earth. Lovitz's painful lack of comic timing, spurred on by Beeman's glaring inability to recognize humor of any merit makes this a definite film to leave off the resumes of everyone involved. Though visually sparkling with colorful production design and polished optical effects, the film is further marred by limp staging. Tony Gardner's lackluster creature effects, though mostly lifeless, deliver the film's only inspired moment—an attack by cute but nasty sewer-dwelling killer mushrooms. More than worthy of its two-year stay on the shelf at Warner Bros, this film deserves to be a fitting epitaph to the already dead sub-genre of **SPACEBALLS**-inspired genre spoofs.

• John Torson

NETHERWORLD

Directed by David Schmoeller. Paramount Video. 7/92, 85 mins. With: Michael Bendetti, Denise Gentile, Anjanette Comer.

Stylishly made but vague and predictable. Michael Bendetti visits the bayou plantation owned by his late father and becomes involved with a cult of "bird people" who want to resurrect the recently deceased lord of the manor. Bendetti half-heartedly acquiesces (he never knew his father) until—surprise—he learns the old man plans to use Bendetti's body to come back in! There is an avian imagery motif throughout the film. The overall production design, photography

and editing are smoothly done. However, it all surrounds a plot so slight that it can scarcely be discerned. Very little goes on (even the special effects are infrequent and—generally—restrained), and consequently, the film is just not very interesting.

•• David Wilt

RAISING CAIN

Directed by Brian DePalma. Universal. 8/92, 95 mins. With: John Lithgow, Lolita Davidovich, Steven Bauer.

After the boondoggle that was **THE BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES**, the heir unapparent to Hitchcock needed a rebound. A strategic retreat to the psycho-thriller format he cut his teeth on seemed a safe play. But, alas, director Brian DePalma's comeback barely raises an eyebrow. DePalma's skill as a technician—the shot-reverse-shot chops, the eye-for-the-jugular pov, and that operatic endgame montage—never quite compensates for his flaws as a storyteller—dour dialogue, characters who are not only unsympathetic but unconvincing, the meandering stop-and-start narrative, and, yes, the trademark homage to/rip-off of you-know-who. (Hitchcock "signed" each of his films with a cameo appearance. DePalma "signs" each of his films with a cameo Hitchcock scene.)

John Lithgow seems to be having fun as a multiple split personality but in this case more is less: the opening tag-team conversations between the mild-mannered child psychologist and his chain smoking evil twin are tightly woven brain scramblers, but upping the ante progressively proves only that in the mind, as on a date, three's a crowd. Lolita Davidovich plays the really dense wife and GQ-styled Stephen Bauer her illicit lover, but neither registers. The victims are all ciphers and the kidnapped children less than backdrop. The trickster ending was

roundly jeered and hooted in the Hollywood Blvd. screening I attended.

• Thomas Doherty

SINGLE WHITE FEMALE

Directed by Barbet Schroeder. Columbia. 8/92, 107 mins. With: Bridget Fonda, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Steven Weber, Peter Friedman.

Recognizing that the real-life terrors of urban life and interpersonal relationships make Freddy Krueger look like Mr. Rogers, the thriller genre looms to surpass horror as the fright mode of choice. To the mental ward of psychotic spouses (**SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY**), lovers (**BASIC INSTINCT**), patients (**FINAL ANALYSIS**, **WHISPERS IN THE DARK**), tenants (**PACIFIC HEIGHTS**) and nannies (**HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE**) add roommates. She borrows your clothes; she kills your dog and your boyfriend. Taking dead aim at the target audience of the title (women alone in the big city, bereft of protection and male companionship), this is a same-sex fatal attraction for the twentysomething set.

Sleek, stylish, and emotionally dependent software analyst Bridget Fonda takes in frumpy, emotionally wacko Jennifer Jason Leigh, who turns into Glenn Close with a meathook. Director Barbet Schroeder (**REVERSAL OF FORTUNE**) shoots the film in dimly lit interiors behind the locked doors and barred windows of a Victorian apartment complex, a self-contained world of blast furnaces, long staircases and antique elevators. The film is front-loaded with the conventions of the female-centered melodrama, but the leads are top-notch (especially Fonda in the less flashy role) and the pace is fast-breaking. The hinterlands may not appreciate the logic of refusing to pull up stakes once your living companion reveals herself to be a dangerous nutcase, but



John Lithgow's acting tour de force gets wasted in Brian DePalma's **RAISING CAIN**.

a spacious rent-controlled apartment in Manhattan is worth risking your life for.

••• Thomas Doherty

UNIVERSAL SOLDIER

Directed by Roland Emmerich. TriStar. 6/92, 104 min. With: Jean-Claude Van Damme, Dolph Lundgren, Ally Walker, Ed O'Ross.

This isn't quite the breakthrough that Sony Pictures Entertainment intended for Jean-Claude Van Damme. Assuming that action-adventure appeals wider than martial arts, the film emphasizes car chases and crashes over karate and kickboxing, forcing fans to wait until the last ten minutes before seeing the two stars finally go *mano a mano*. Along the way, director Roland Emmerich proves that he can blow things up real good—about as good as Renny Harlin, in fact, and with about as much attention to the subtle nuance of suspense, plot and characterization.

The film's **ROBOCOP** storyline, of a character revived from the dead, who gradually regains his memory and personality, never works as much more than an excuse for the mayhem. Dolph Lundgren, badly overplays his villainous role, like a singer straining for notes out of his range. His mere physical presence, properly underplayed, would have been sufficiently threatening. Van Damme fares better as the deadpan straight man to put-upon, wise-cracking reporter Ally Walker, who shoulders the acting chores, such as they are. Not bad overall, but leaves one to ponder how much better original director Andrew Davis' version might have been.

•• Steve Biodrowski

Rossellini and Willis in **DEATH BECOMES HER**, darkly comic.



LETTERS

MEASURE OF A PAN

My respect for former STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION story editor Melinda Snodgrass and her work prompts me to respond to Rick Berman's comments about her [23:2/3]. Regarding her *Omni* piece critical of THE NEXT GENERATION, Berman says, "You're hearing that from somebody who left the show and was not invited back. That can't be taken seriously. It's sour grapes."

Well, I'm confused. On page 45 of the same issue, Berman's co-exec producer, Mike Piller, discussing "all the great STAR TREKs," cites Melinda's script "Measure of a Man" as one of them. Even if Berman's claim were true, how is it you don't "invite back" a writer who wrote one of the "the great ones... great science fiction," and incidentally the *only* NEXT GENERATION script ever to be nominated for a Writers Guild Award—or any other writing award, for that matter?

The fact is, at the end of the third season, Snodgrass told Berman and Piller she wished to leave a month before the completion of that season's filming, and that she did not wish to return next season. Her decision. As for the rest of Berman's comments, Snodgrass

currently serves as executive story editor on NBC's REASONABLE DOUBTS; she is co-writing a feature screenplay for Hollywood Films, with George R.R. Martin; and she has sold two pilots of her own, an SF series, HIGH JUSTICE, to Fox Broadcasting Company, and a detective show, TURQUOISE BLUES, to NBC. If anyone should be feeling "sour grapes," it should be STAR TREK, for having let slip through their fingers a writer of such obvious talent.

Alan Brennert
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403

ENOUGH ALREADY!

Another bloody STAR TREK issue!!!! Even though as a boy and youth, I avidly watched the shows, I can't describe myself as a Trekkie—I do however have a certain affinity for the characters and ideas behind the films and TV show but please, no more! I'd rather see a retrospective issue on Ray Dennis Steckler movies. I think that even though the new and old shows have a tremendous cultural significance on your side of the pond, to run another issue showing even more photos of FX techs painting *Enterprise* models and even more interesting photos of that fine actor Patrick Stewart, is stretching things a little. Bot-

tom-of-the-barrel scraping however, has got to be a special sidebar on the problems of costume wrinkling!

Please, by all means devote pages of your magazine to this cultural icon. But not whole issues and double issues. Intelligent comment on the genre as a whole is difficult to come by and your magazine is one of the few places to find it. Please don't keep repeating yourselves.

David Dunne
Manchester, England

RAVING ABOUT RIDLEY

It's bad enough you guys rave about crude drivel like HELLRAISER and HELLBOUND or THE EVIL DEAD, but then you waste page after page on THE REFLECTING SKIN [23:2/3:115] and the pretentious asshole who made it. Hey, don't get me wrong; when I was 23 and a pretentious asshole, I directed my share of Anouilh and snappy Sammy Beckett.

When THE REFLECTING SKIN was released, the *Variety* review said the picture was unusual, so I trotted to the local video emporium as soon as the damned thing came in. Hey, it has some gorgeous photography, and even a terrific premise which peters out halfway through. Instead of developing the story, all of a sudden this wooden kid is having heart-to-heart talks with a rotting fetus. Oh, sure, it must be a Symbol, oh, whack me over the head with a Log.

If Steven Spielberg or George Lucas or anyone else on your hate list had made this picture, you'd be raking them over the editorial coals for the lapses in logic and corny symbolism. But because this arrogant *poseur* with his childish paintings slathers a field with paint and chucks ridiculous symbols into his half-baked prattlings, he's an *artiste*. Why does Genius always find Depth in Death and Decay while shrieking over the Loss of Innocence? Why is the *avant-garde* still dragging out the same obvious themes in the same tedious fashion over the Twin Peaks of Boredom?

The only thing left out of your film school analysis was Deep Focus—a sure sign of Art. I don't know why you didn't mention this, but *porque demande porque?*

Ron Fontes
Phippsburg, ME 04562



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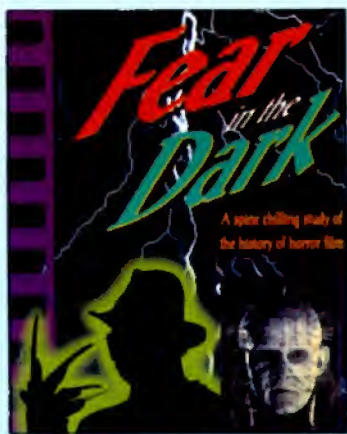
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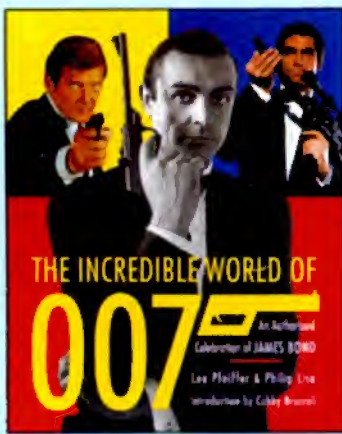
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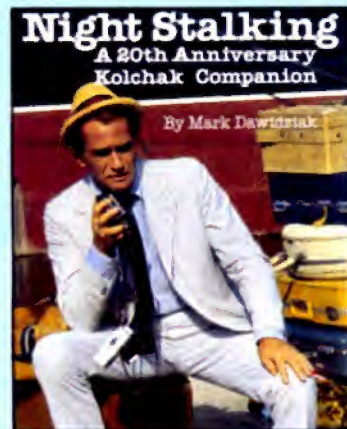
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Femme Fatales - Vol 1 No 2

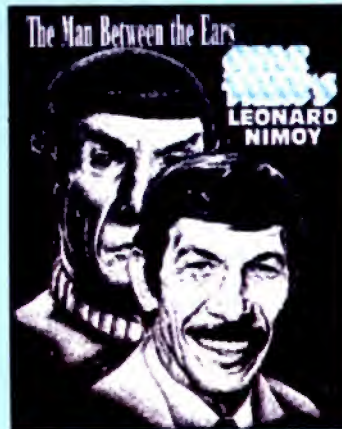
The second issue of our brand, spanning new publication *Femme Fatales* is available on newsstands now. Start a subscription now and take our collector's edition first issue as part of your subscription, if you missed it. This new quarterly, edited by Bill George, is a high-quality, full-color publication loaded with photos of gorgeous gals, interviews with the B-Queens themselves and insightful behind-the-scenes articles. Subscribe and receive a personally autographed full-color 8x10 photo of Scream Queen Brinke Stevens.



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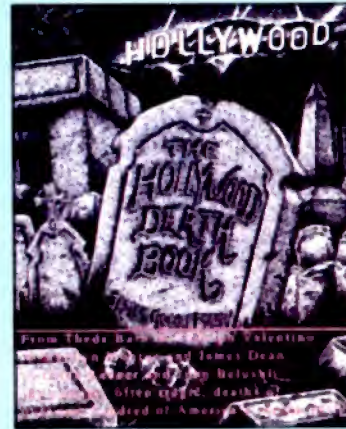
Journalist Mark Dawidziak tells all as rumbled reporter, Carl Kolchak, battles valiantly to save a non-believing world from things that go bump in the night. From the first movie in 1972 to 1992 when the Night Stalker returns in an all-new movie to mark the series' 20th Anniversary, the reader is taken on a guided tour through 20 years of terror. This is the behind-the-scenes tale of an everyman hero who is neither brilliant nor strong but has integrity. Paper, 155 pp. 8 1/2 x 11.



The Man Between the Ears

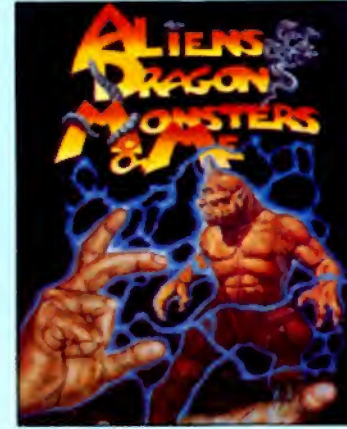
STAR TREK's Leonard Nimoy

Leonard Nimoy. The name immediately conjures up the vision of pointed ears and the character of STAR TREK's Mr. Spock. The association is so intense that it would almost seem as though the character created the actor. But this book by James Van Hise and Pioneer will redress this tragicomic imbalance by showing how 25 years of preparation and struggle gave Nimoy the depth required to make Mr. Spock believable. Also coverage of Nimoy's directing career. Paper, 154 pp. 8 1/2 x 11.



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From Theda Bara and Rudolph Valentino to Marilyn Monroe and James Dean, James Robert Parish and Pioneer have compiled factual accounts of the strange and often tragic deaths of over 100 of America's most famous Hollywood actors and actresses. Included are chapters on accidental deaths, murders, alcohol and drug overdoses, suicides, deaths by natural causes and deaths under mysterious circumstances. Also contained in this book is a necrology of notable actors and directors through 12/31/91. Paper, 252 pp. 8 1/2 x 11.



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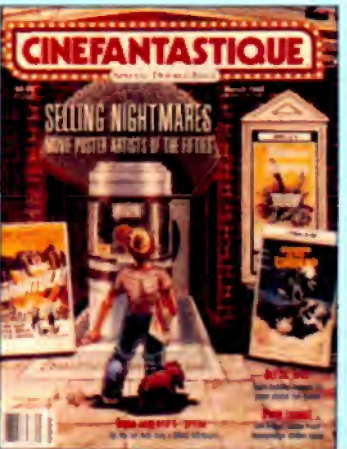
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